



Australian Government

Defence

# Australian Defence Force CENSUS 2023

## Public Report



ROY  
MORGAN

Workforce Strategy Branch  
Defence People Group  
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Requests and inquiries should be addressed to:

Manager Defence Census

Directorate of People Intelligence and Research

Workforce Strategy Branch

BP35-04-072

PO Box 7922

Canberra BC ACT 2610

Australia

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C1968A00063>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2021C00127>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Series/C2004A03712>

<sup>4</sup> <http://drnet/AssociateSecretary/security/policy/Pages/dspf.aspx>

# Foreword

The ADF Census, conducted in 2023, provides an important account of the demographic characteristics of the ADF workforce and their families.

Census information is used for planning, policy development and evaluation across Defence and its key stakeholders to inform the provision of contemporary conditions of service and support to the Defence community. The 2023 ADF Census demographic information is also important to inform the implementation of the personnel initiatives for the ADF workforce.

The Defence Census program is held at four yearly intervals and was first undertaken in 1991. The ADF Census 2023 received some 35,000 voluntary anonymous responses across the ADF workforce. Unlike previous Censuses, the primary mode of survey completion was online.

The Defence Census program provides a comprehensive information resource that describes the characteristics of the ADF across a wide range of demographic attributes. This report enables readers to gain an understanding of the attributes of the ADF workforce as Defence implements the National Defence Strategy.

**Natasha Fox, AO, CSC**  
Lieutenant General  
Chief of Personnel



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## Introduction

This Public Report presents the main results for each of the two Defence workforce components involved in the 2023 ADF Census: Permanent ADF (ADF(P)) and ADF Reserve (ADF(R)).

The objective of the ADF Census is to provide a comprehensive picture of the Defence workforce and their dependants. Data from previous Defence Censuses conducted every four years from 1991 to 2019 have been used to develop and refine personnel and family support policies within and affecting Defence.



The 2023 ADF Census was conducted on 3-6 April 2023 using a slightly modified methodology to that used in previous years, with ADF personnel given the opportunity to answer the Census questionnaire primarily online, alternatively via hardcopy. Due to the unique nature of ADF Service, members were afforded the opportunity to complete the Census up to and including June 2023.

Participation in the ADF Census was voluntary; 47% of Permanent ADF and, 40% of ADF Reserve personnel participated in the ADF Census 2023. All data presented in this report has been weighted to be representative of the total ADF population at the time of the Census with a 95% confidence limit of 1.11% for the total sample.

Results for subgroups may not sum exactly to reported totals due to rounding. Reported totals are drawn directly from underlying data and are correct.



# The ADF Community

The Australian Defence Force Census 2023 included all Permanent ADF (SERCAT 7 & 6) and selected ADF Reserve (SERCAT 5, 4 & 3) members.

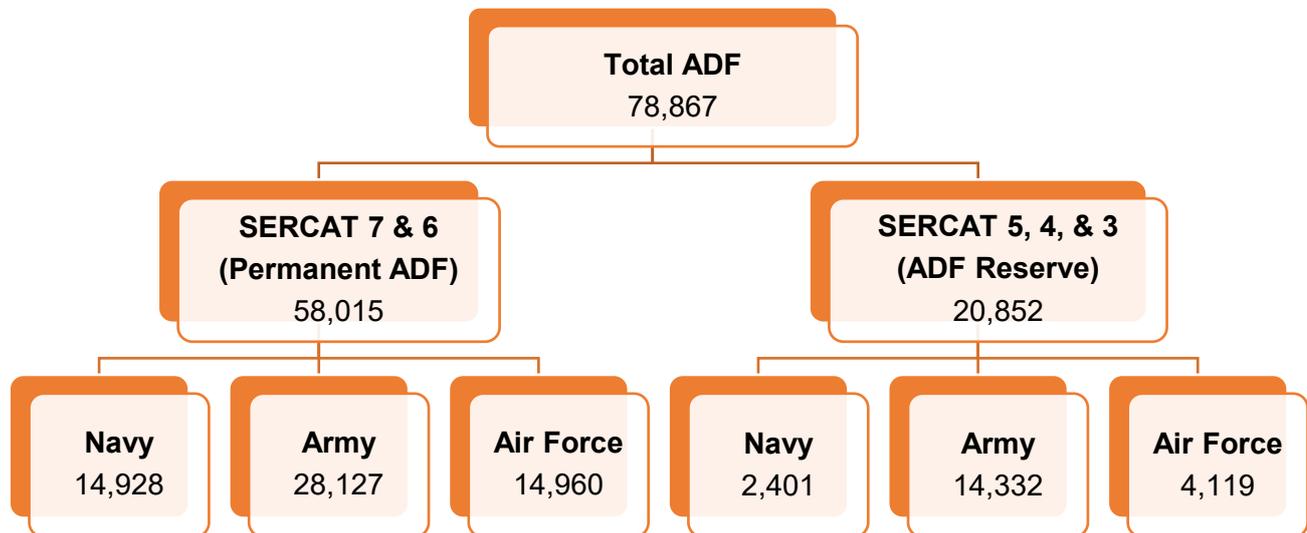
The total population covered by the 2023 Census was **78,867** personnel, comprising:

- **58,015** Permanent ADF (SERCAT 7 & 6) members
- **20,852** ADF Reserve (SERCAT 5, 4 & 3) members who had undertaken at least one day of paid service (in any SERCAT) since 1 July 2022 (including those on SERVOP C [CFTS])

Census populations have been derived from information corresponding to the Census period (3-6 April 2023). The total ADF headcount at April 2023 was: SERCAT 7 & 6 – 58,015, SERCAT 5, 4 & 3 - 31,929 (includes the 20,852 who had rendered service in the financial year) and SERCAT 2 - 9,964 the contingent category with no obligation to render service.

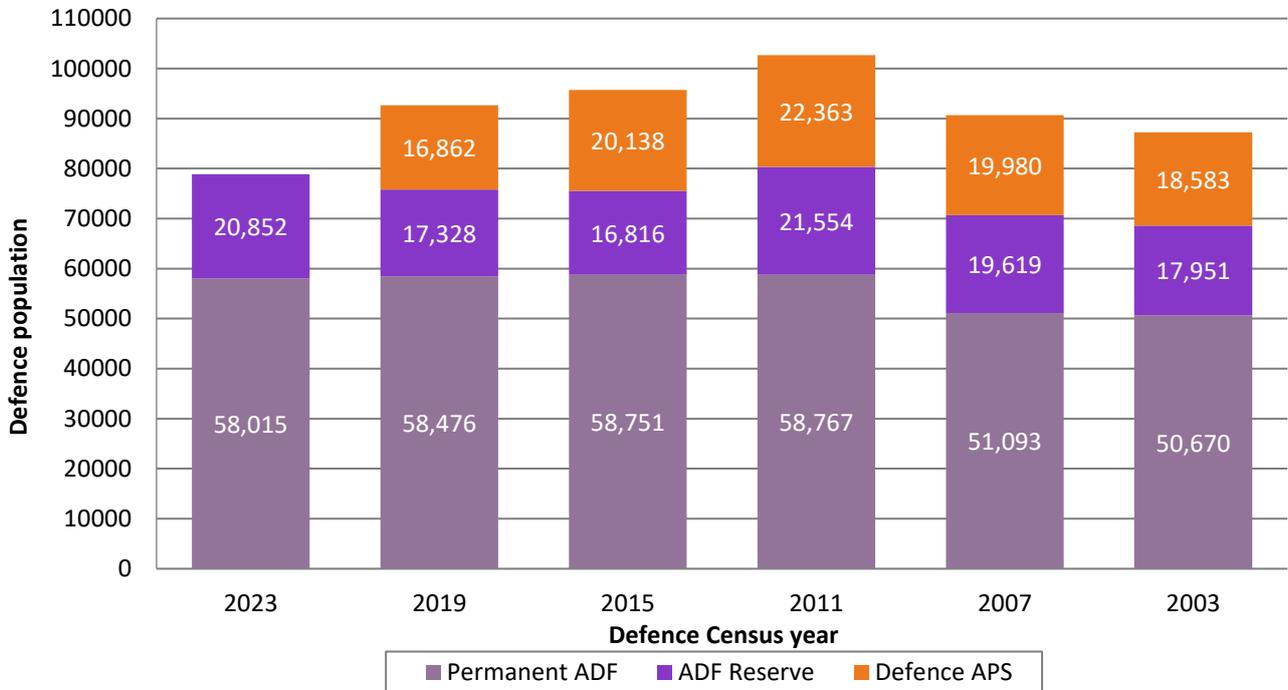
The number of personnel in each of the main components of the ADF is displayed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Composition of ADF personnel**



The 2023 ADF population was marginally larger than that of 2019 (up 4% overall from the 75,804 ADF personnel in the 2019 Census), with the increase in population coming from the ADF Reserve<sup>5</sup>. Figure 2 shows the change in Defence population by component over time. The population of the Permanent ADF was largely unchanged from 2011. The ADF Reserve population increased by 20%, growing from 17,328 members in 2019 to 20,852 selected members in 2023. The Defence APS was not included in the ADF Census in 2023.

**Figure 2: Size of Defence population over time**



Source: ADF Census 2023, Defence Census 2019, Defence Census 2015, Defence Census 2011, Defence Census 2007, Defence Census 2003  
 Base: Total ADF personnel (2023), Total Defence personnel (2003-2019)

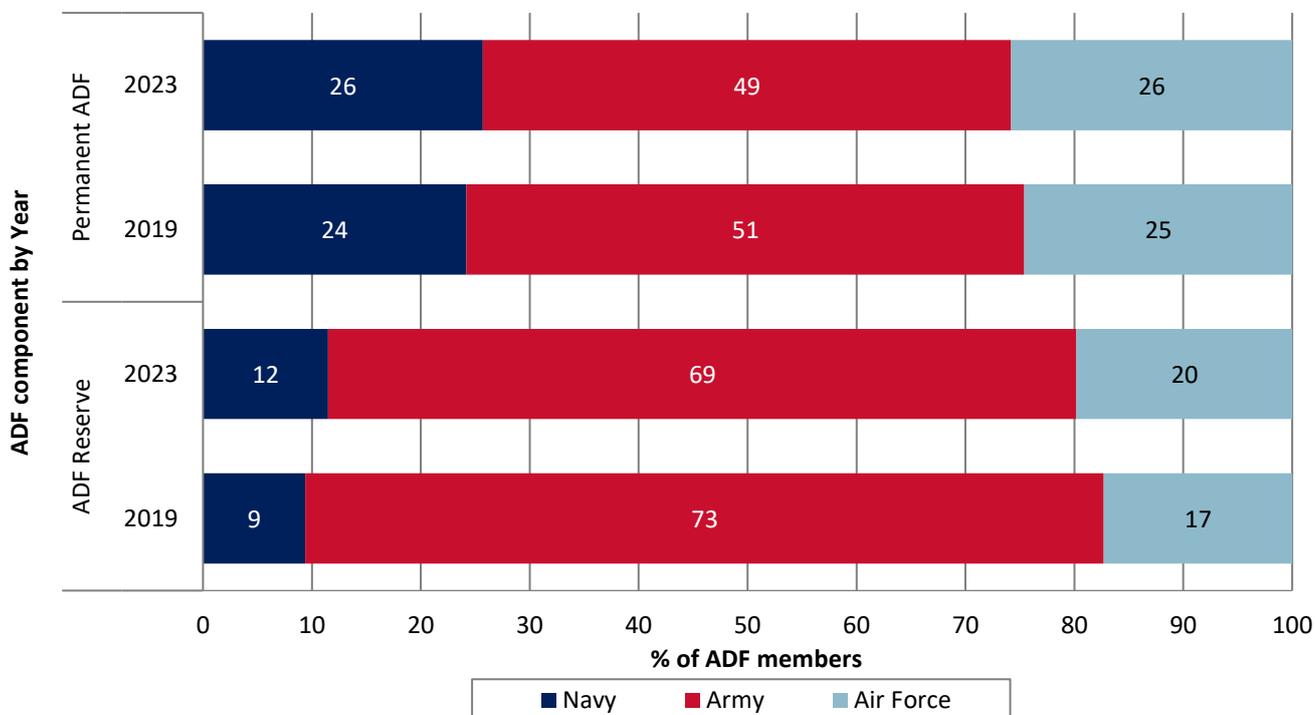


<sup>5</sup> Part of the increase in Reserve population is due to the expanded definition of selected Reserve personnel in the 2023 Census, which included members who were in SERCAT 5, 4 & 3 at the time of the Census, and had undertaken at least one day of paid service (in any SERCAT) since July 2022. In 2019, members in SERCAT 5,4 & 3 at the time of the Census, and had undertaken at least one day of paid Reserve service since July 2022 were included in the Reserve population.



Of the 58,015 Permanent ADF members in 2023, 14,928 (26%) were in the Navy, 28,127 (48%) were in the Army, and 14,960 (26%) were in the Air Force. These percentages were similar to those observed in 2019. Of the 20,852 Reserve ADF members, 12% were in the Navy, nearly seven in ten (69%) were in the Army and 20% were in the Air Force. The proportion of Army Reserve members decreased from 73% in 2019, with a slight increase in the proportion of Naval and Air Force Reserve members (9% and 17% respectively in 2019) observed over this period, as shown in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3: ADF(P) and ADF(R) Service composition – 2023 compared with 2019**



Source: ADF Census 2023, Defence Census 2019. **Note:** Values may not sum to totals due to rounding

Base: Total Permanent ADF members 2023 N=58,015, 2019 N=58,476 and Total Reserve ADF members 2023 N=20,852, 2019 N=17,328



# ADF Personnel: Demographic Profile

## Permanent Force

The gender breakdown in the Permanent ADF in 2023 included 78% males, 20% females, 0.3% non-binary and 0.1% using a different term. There was a higher proportion of females in 2023 than in 2019 when the gender ratio was 80% males to 18% females, with 0.3% gender X (intersex/indeterminate/unspecified). The proportion of females has increased across all Services, most noticeably in the Navy (24% females, up from 21%) and Air Force (26% females, up from 23%), as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Gender of ADF(P) members by Service**

Gender	Total ADF(P) %	Navy %	Army %	Air Force %
<i>N</i>	58,015	14,928	28,127	14,960
Man or male	78.5	74.6	83.7	72.6
Woman or female	20.4	24.2	15.1	26.5
Non-binary	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4
I use a different term	0.1	0.1	0.1	*
Prefer not to say	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.4
No response provided	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
% of males in 2019	80	77	84	76
% of females in 2019	18	21	14	23

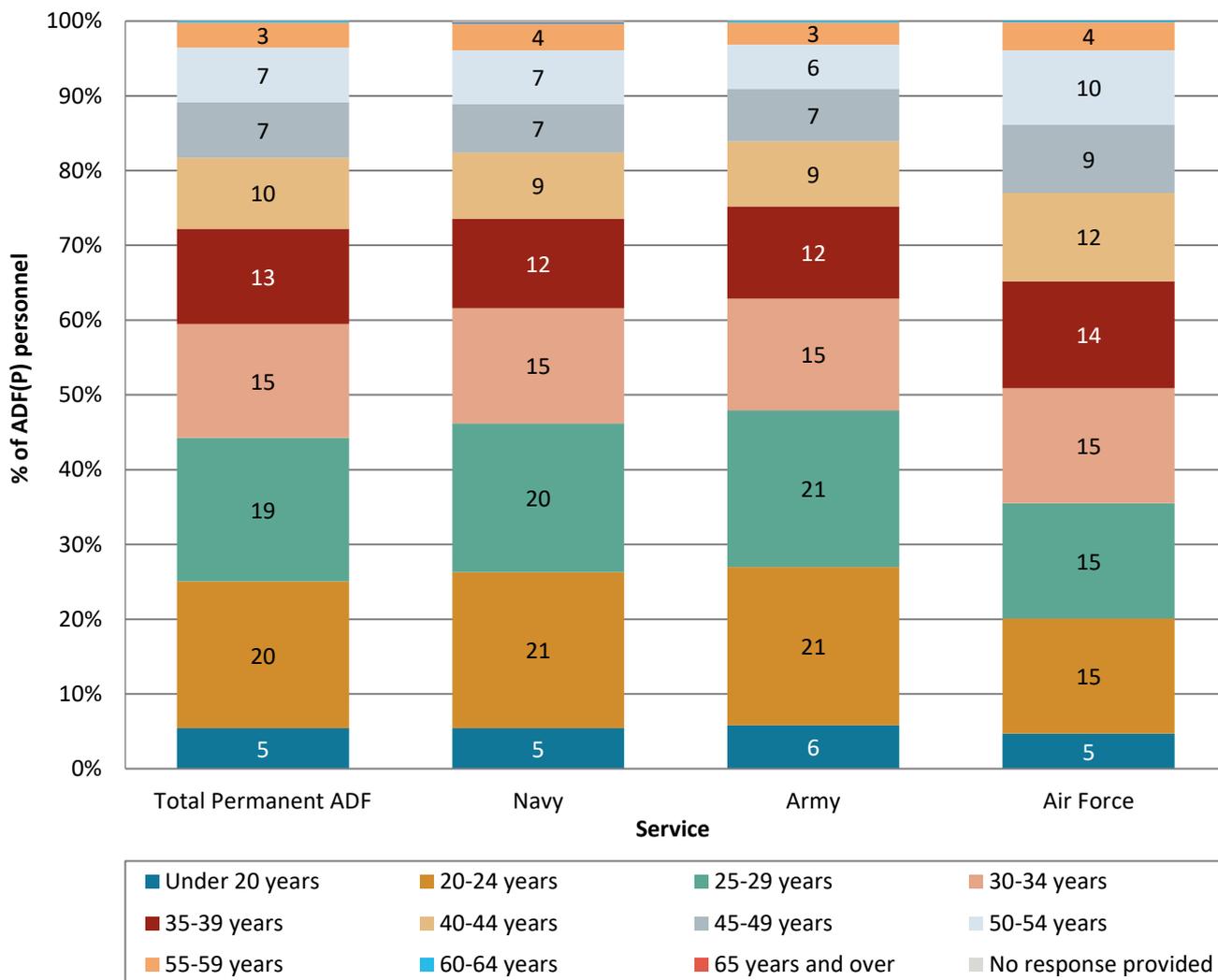
Source: ADF Census 2023, Defence Census 2019. **Note:** - indicates a zero response and \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.05%. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
Base: Total Permanent ADF members





The most prevalent age group across the Permanent ADF was 20-29 years, with around two in five (39%) falling into this category; specifically, 20% were aged 20-24 years and 19% were aged 25-29 years. Navy and Army broadly reflected this profile, but Air Force had a slightly older profile, with 50% aged 35 years and over compared with 38% for Navy and 37% for Army, as shown in Figure 4 below. Overall, the median age amongst Permanent ADF members in 2023 was 31 years, consistent with 2019.

**Figure 4: Age of ADF(P) members by Service**



Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
 Base: Total Permanent ADF members N=58,015; Navy N=14,928, Army N=28,127, Air Force N=14,960

In each of the younger age categories (up to 29 years), there were higher proportions of females than males. In comparison to the overall number of females in the Permanent ADF, there is an over-representation in the 20-24 years age bracket (24%, compared to 19% for males). This is due to growth in the younger female age bracket against the younger overall age profile compared to that of males. From age 35, in every age category there were higher proportions of males than females, particularly in the 50 years and over age bracket. The median age increased for males (32 years from 31 years in 2019) as well as females (29 years from 28 years in 2019).

In 2023, more than half (54%) of the Permanent ADF were in the OR/JNCO rank group. OR/JNCO was the largest rank group<sup>6</sup> across all Services, ranging from 44% in Air Force to 59% in Army, as shown in Table 2 below. The proportion of Junior Officers was much higher in Air Force (32%) when compared with the other Services (Navy 23%; Army 19%).

**Table 2: Rank of ADF(P) members by Service**

Rank group	Total ADF(P) %	Navy %	Army %	Air Force %
<i>N</i>	58,015	14,928	28,127	14,960
OR/JNCO	54	53	59	44
SNCO/WO	18	19	17	18
JNR OFFR	24	23	19	32
SNR OFFR	5	5	4	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Values may not sum to totals due to rounding

Base: Total Permanent ADF members

Males made up the majority of the Permanent ADF across all ranks. The proportion of males and females across ranks has changed most noticeably in the Senior Officer<sup>7</sup> rank since the 2019 Census: Females now comprise 19% (up from 15%) of Senior Officers. Junior Officers remains the rank group with the highest proportion of females (23% in 2023 and 21% in 2019), as shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Gender of ADF(P) members by Rank**

Gender	Total ADF(P) %	OR/ JNCO %	SNCO/ WO %	JNR OFFR %	SNR OFFR %
<i>N</i>	58,015	31,250	10,392	13,689	2,684
Man or male	78.5	77.1	85.0	76.3	80.8
Woman or female	20.4	21.4	14.3	23.1	18.6
Non-binary	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.2
I use a different term	0.1	0.1	*	0.1	-
Prefer not to say	0.7	0.9	0.5	0.3	0.2
No response provided	0.1	0.1	0.1	*	0.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
% of males in 2019	80	79	87	78	84
% of females in 2019	18	19	12	21	15

Source: ADF Census 2023, Defence Census 2019. **Note:** - indicates a zero response and \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.05%. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding

Base: Total Permanent ADF members

<sup>6</sup> Please refer to the Glossary for an explanation of who is included in each rank group.

<sup>7</sup> Please refer to the Glossary for an explanation of who is included in each rank group.



## Reserve Force

The proportion of females in the ADF Reserve has increased since the 2019 Census. Gender proportions in 2023 were 80% male (down from 82% in 2019), 19% female (up from 17%), 0.3% non-binary and 0.1% using a different term (compared to 0.1% X(intersex/indeterminate/unspecified) in 2019).

The proportion of females increased in all Services; Navy had 73% males (down from 75% in 2019) and 26% females (up from 25%) giving them the highest proportion of females, Army comprised 82% males (down from 85%) and 17% females (up from 15%) giving them the highest proportion of males, and Air Force comprised 75% males (down from 77%) and 24% females (up from 23%), as shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4: Gender of ADF(R) members by Service**

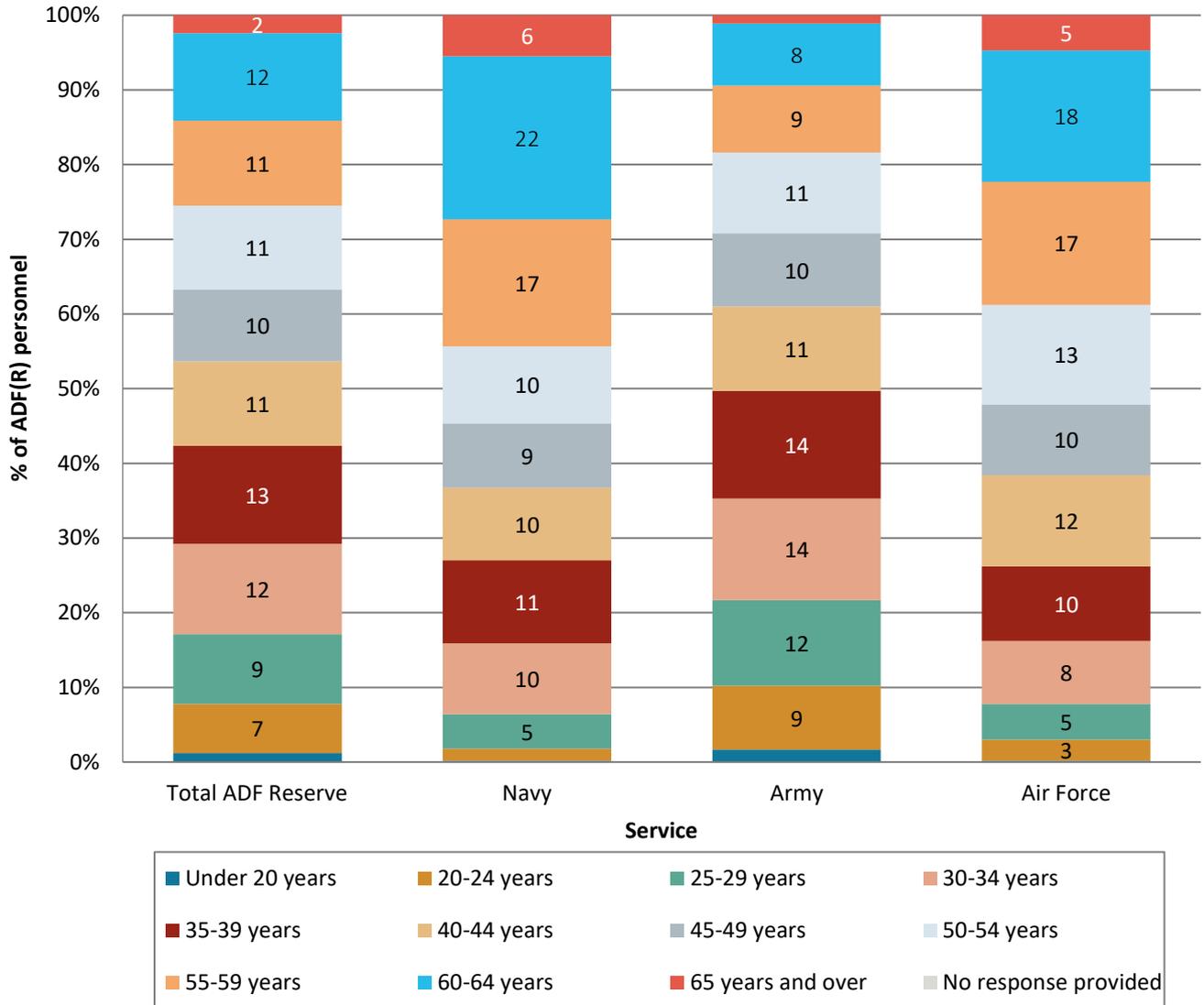
Gender	Total ADF(R) %	Navy %	Army %	Air Force %
<i>N</i>	20,852	2,401	14,332	4,119
Man or male	79.8	73.0	82.4	74.8
Woman or female	19.2	25.6	16.7	24.3
Non-binary	0.3	0.7	0.3	0.2
I use a different term	0.1	0.2	*	0.2
Prefer not to say	0.6	0.3	0.6	0.5
No response provided	0.1	0.2	0.1	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
% of males in 2019	82	75	85	77
% of females in 2019	17	25	15	23

Source: ADF Census 2023, Defence Census 2019. **Note:** - indicates a zero response. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
Base: Total Reserve ADF members



More than half of the Naval and Air Force Reserve were aged 50 years or more (55% for Navy and 52% for Air Force). The proportion aged 50 years or more in the Army Reserve was a relatively low 29%, as shown below in Figure 5. Overall, Reserve ADF members had a median age of 43 years in 2023, consistent with 2019.

**Figure 5: Age of ADF(R) members by Service**



Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
 Base: Total Reserve ADF members N=20,852; Navy N=2,401, Army N=14,332, Air Force N=4,119

Gender proportions varied by age group. Female proportions were higher for almost all age groups except those 55 years and over, where the proportion of males was substantially higher. Overall, the median age for males was 43 years, compared with 41 years for females.



The profile of ranks within the ADF Reserve in 2023 differed significantly across the Services. Relative to the other Services, Army Reserve had a substantially higher proportion of OR/JNCO members, and a substantially lower proportion of SNCO/WO members, Junior Officers and Senior Officers<sup>8</sup>, as shown in Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Rank of ADF(R) members by Service**

Rank group	Total ADF(R) %	Navy %	Army %	Air Force %
<i>N</i>	20,852	2,401	14,332	4,119
OR/JNCO	50	23	60	30
SNCO/WO	17	27	14	24
JNR OFFR	24	32	21	32
SNR OFFR	9	18	6	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Values may not sum to totals due to rounding

Base: Total Reserve ADF members

Although males comprised the majority of the ADF Reserve across all ranks, the proportion of females in each rank group increased relative to 2019, other than SNCO/WO, where the proportion remained stable. Females now comprise 19% of OR/JNCO members in the ADF Reserve (up from 17% in 2019), 22% of Junior Officers (up from 20% in 2019), and 15% of Senior Officers (up from 12% in 2019), as shown in Table 6 below.

**Table 6: Gender of ADF(R) members by Rank**

Gender	Total ADF(R) %	OR/ JNCO %	SNCO/ WO %	JNR OFFR %	SNR OFFR %
<i>N</i>	20,852	10,372	3,599	5,101	1,780
Man or male	79.8	79.6	81.9	77.0	84.5
Woman or female	19.2	19.1	17.4	22.1	14.9
Non-binary	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.3
I use a different term	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Prefer not to say	0.6	0.7	0.4	0.6	0.1
No response provided	0.1	0.1	*	0.1	0.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
% of males in 2019	82	83	83	80	87
% of females in 2019	17	17	17	20	12

Source: ADF Census 2023, Defence Census 2019. **Note:** \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.05%. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding

Base: Total Reserve ADF members

<sup>8</sup> Please refer to the Glossary for an explanation of who is included in each rank group.

# Diversity

## Permanent ADF

### First Nations People

In the 2023 Census, 3.9% of Permanent ADF members indicated that they were of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. This compared with a total of 3.7% in the 2019 Census. The breakdown by Service shows that Navy (4.4%) had a slightly higher proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander members than Army (4.1%) and Air Force (3.2%). Predominantly, personnel of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin were of Aboriginal origin only.

### Country of Birth and Ancestry

The vast majority of Permanent ADF members (84%) were born in Australia, down from 87% in 2019. Outside of Australia, the most common countries of birth of Permanent ADF members were the United Kingdom (4%), New Zealand and India (each 1%), with South Africa, the Philippines and China (PRC including Hong Kong) each recording just under 1%.

With respect to ancestry, over seven in ten Permanent ADF members (72%) were of Australian ancestry, down from 73% in 2019. The next most common ancestries identified with were English (26%), Scottish (11%), Irish (9%) and German (6%).

### Languages spoken

Almost nine in ten (88%) of Permanent ADF members indicated that their first language spoken was exclusively English, down from 91% in 2019. A further 8% indicated that they initially spoke English and another language (up from 6% in 2019), while 4% spoke only a language other than English as their first language (up from 3% in 2019).

The vast majority of Permanent ADF members (95%) indicated that they speak fluent English, up from 92% in 2019. The most commonly spoken non-English languages were Hindi (1.5%), French, Mandarin, German, Spanish, Tagalog, Indonesian and Punjabi, although all were spoken by fewer than 1% of Permanent ADF members.

### Religion

Over six in ten Permanent ADF members indicated they had no religious affiliation (61%), up from 56% in 2019. The most common religious affiliation was Christian (34%, down from 40% in 2019), with another 3% of members nominating non-Christian religions, the most common of which were Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Sikhism (each just under 1%).

### Sexual orientation

The vast majority (93%) of Permanent ADF described their sexual orientation as straight (heterosexual). A further 3% described themselves as gay or lesbian, and another 3% described themselves as bisexual.



## ADF Reserve

### First Nations People

In the 2023 Census, 3.1% of Reserve ADF members indicated that they were of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. This compared with a total of 2.6% in the 2019 Census. The breakdown by Service shows that Army Reserve (3.5%) had a higher proportion of members of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin than Air Force Reserve (2.5%) and Naval Reserve (1.5%). Predominantly, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Reserve members were of Aboriginal origin only.

### Country of Birth and Ancestry

The majority of Reserve ADF members (80%) were born in Australia, down from 83% in 2019. Outside of Australia, the most common country of birth of Reserve ADF members was the United Kingdom (6% - up from 5% in 2019), followed by India (2%), with 1% each indicating that they were born in New Zealand, China (PRC including Hong Kong), the Philippines or South Africa.

With respect to ancestry, under two thirds of Reserve ADF members (63%) were of Australian ancestry, down from 66% in 2019. The next most common ancestries identified with were English (27% - down from 32% in 2019), Scottish (11%), Irish (10%) and German (6%).

### Languages spoken

A little over four in five Reserve ADF members (84%) indicated that their first spoken language was English only, down from 87% in 2019. Overall, 10% of ADF Reserve personnel first spoke English and another language as a child (up from 9% in 2019), while 5% indicated their first spoken language was a language other than English (the same as in 2019).

The vast majority of ADF Reserve personnel (93%) indicated that they could speak fluent English, up from 89% in 2019. The most commonly spoken non-English languages were Hindi, Mandarin, German, French, Indonesian, Spanish, Cantonese, Punjabi, Tagalog and Italian, all just over or just under 1%.

### Religion

In contrast to the Permanent ADF, more Reserve ADF members had a religious affiliation than did not, with 46% of Reserve ADF members indicating that they had no religious affiliation, up from 40% in 2019. Almost half (48%) of Reserve ADF members identified as Christian, down from 56% in 2019. The most commonly nominated religions were Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Sikhism, all registering just above or just below 1%.

### Sexual orientation

Within the ADF Reserve, members most commonly described themselves as straight (heterosexual) (95%), while 2% described themselves as gay or lesbian and 2% described themselves as bisexual.

# Relationships and Categorisation

## Permanent ADF

Across the Permanent ADF, members were most commonly either married or in a relationship (65%), with the majority indicating that they were married (35%). Air Force members were more likely to be married (42%) than Army (34%) or Navy (31%) members, and less likely to be in a relationship that was not recognised by the ADF (8%, compared with 12% of Navy and 11% of Army members).

Just over three in ten Permanent members (31%) indicated that they were not in a relationship, with the highest proportion (28%) indicating that they were single. Air Force members (27%) were less likely than those in Navy (34%) or Army (32%) to indicate that they were not in a relationship.

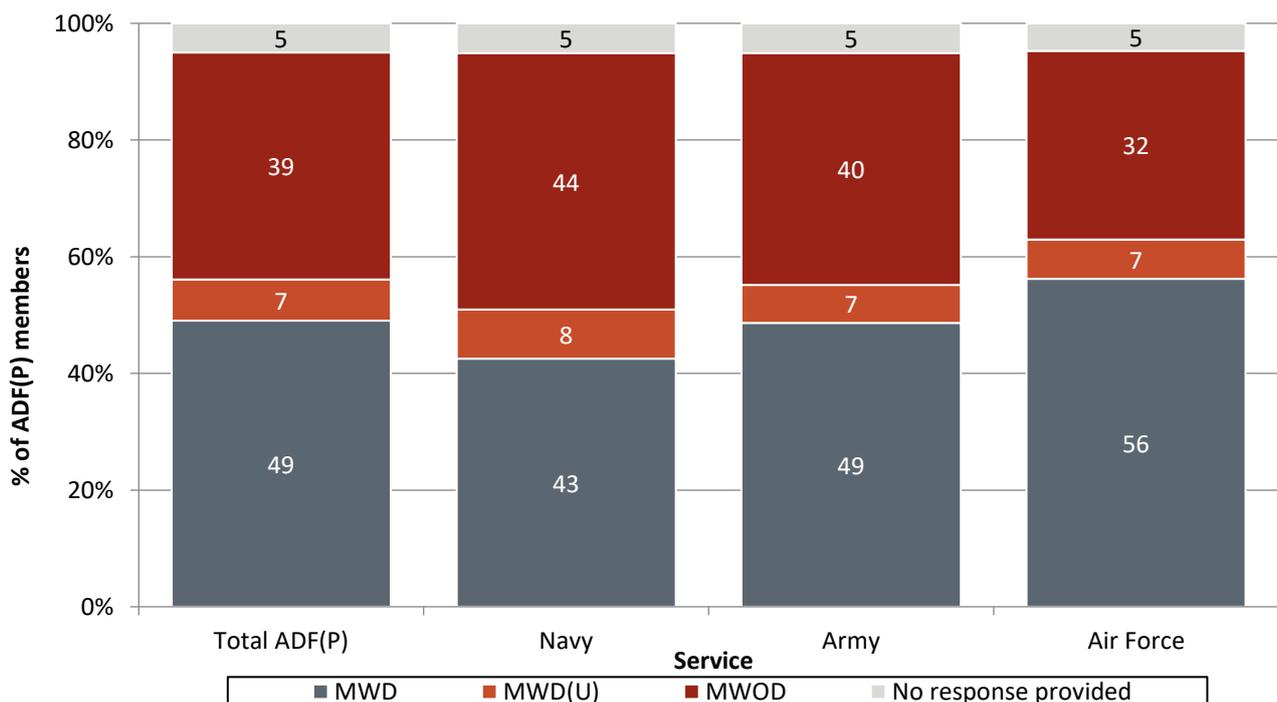
In the Permanent ADF, males were more likely to be in a relationship (67%) than were females (59%), and in particular, were far more likely to be married (39% of males compared with 23% of females). Members in senior ranks were much more likely to be married or in a relationship (89% for Senior Officers and 82% for SNCO/WO) than were those in junior ranks (70% for Junior Officers and 56% for OR/JNCO).

Defence adopted a new categorisation framework in July 2023. As the ADF Census was collected from April 2023 the categorisation questions used the previous terminology and are reported in the Census results. The previous categories map to the new categories as shown below:

Previous:		New:
<b>MWOD</b> (Member without Dependants)	→	<b>MBR</b> (Member)
<b>MWD</b> (Member with Dependants)	→	<b>ARF</b> (Accompanied Resident Family)
<b>MWD(U)</b> (Member with Dependants (Unaccompanied))	→	<b>URF</b> (Unaccompanied Resident Family)

Members categorised as a Member with Dependants (MWD) comprised 49% of the Permanent ADF, with Air Force comprising the highest proportion at 56%. Members without Dependants (MWOD) comprised 39% of the Permanent ADF, while Members with Dependants (Unaccompanied) (MWD(U)) comprised 7%. Navy members were slightly more likely (8%) to be categorised as MWD(U) than members in Army or Air Force (both 7%), as shown below in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Categorisation of ADF(P) members by Service**



Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
 Base: Total Permanent ADF members N=58,015; Navy N=14,928, Army N=28,127, Air Force N=14,960



## ADF Reserve

Across the ADF Reserve, members were most commonly married (55%), with a total of almost three quarters (74%) indicating that they were married or in a relationship. Just over two in five (22%) indicated that they were not in a relationship, with the majority (16%) indicating that they were single. Army Reserve members (71%) were less likely to be married, and most likely to indicate that they were not in a relationship (25%) than those in the Naval (81% married, 17% not in a relationship) or Air Force Reserve (81% married; 16% not in a relationship).

Males in the ADF Reserve were more likely than females to be married or in a relationship (77% of males compared with 65% of females). OR/JNCO members were much less likely to be married or in a relationship (67%) than other ranks, and conversely were more likely than other rank groups to be single (23%).



## Length of Service

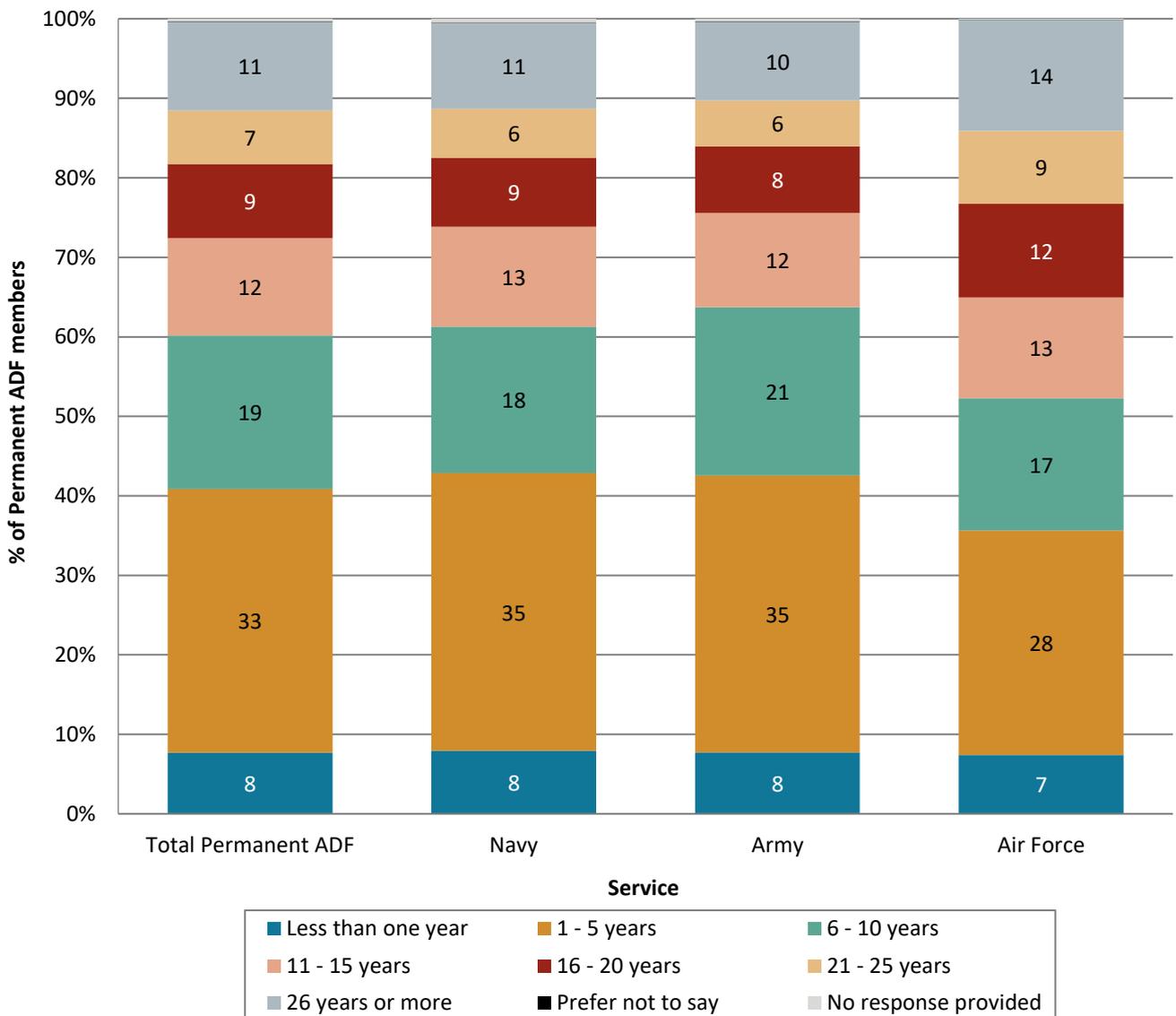
In the 2023 ADF Census there were some differences in the lengths of service between ADF workforce components. ADF Reserve had a somewhat higher proportion of shorter serving members (50% with 5 years or less service in the ADF Reserve) than Permanent ADF (41% with 5 years or less service in the ADF).

### Permanent ADF

The length of service numbers for Permanent ADF members referred to below are for total length of service in the ADF (that is years served in ADF(P) **and** ADF(R) combined).

Within the Permanent ADF, Navy and Army had a higher proportion of members with shorter service (both 43% with 5 years or less), than those in Air Force (36%). Conversely Air Force had a higher proportion of members with 16 years or more service (35%) than Navy (26%) and Army (24%), as shown below in Figure 7.

**Figure 7: Length of combined (ADF(P)/ADF(R)) service amongst ADF(P) members by Service**



Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
 Base: Total Permanent ADF members N=58,015; Navy N=14,928, Army N=28,127, Air Force N=14,960



In 2023, females had a shorter length of combined ADF service (49% had served for 5 years or less) compared with males (39% for the same service duration). Conversely males had higher proportions of longer service periods (29% for 16 years or more) compared with females (19% for the same service period). Since the 2019 Defence Census, median years of service decreased by one year for males (from 9 to 8 years), but increased by one year for females (from 5 years to 6 years).

In 2023, there was an increase in the proportion of Navy and Air Force members with shorter service periods (5 years or less) compared to results from 2019 and 2015; while the proportion has remained relatively stable for Army (44% - 2015 and 2019; 43% - 2023). For Air Force proportions serving for 6-10 years and 11-15 years have declined in 2023, while for Navy only proportions serving 6-10 years have declined in 2023. Overall, median length of service had not changed for Army since 2015, but for Navy and Air Force, median length of service has returned to 2015 levels after a slight increase in 2019, as shown in Table 7 below.

**Table 7: Length of combined ADF(P)/ADF(R) service amongst ADF(P) members by Service over time**

Length of service	Total ADF(P)			Navy			Army			Air Force		
	2023	2019	2015	2023	2019	2015	2023	2019	2015	2023	2019	2015
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>N</i>	58,015	58,476	58,751	14,928	14,139	14,346	28,127	29,968	29,994	14,960	14,369	14,411
5 years or less	41	39	38	43	41	38	43	44	44	36	29	26
6 - 10 years	19	20	22	18	21	23	21	21	22	17	18	24
11 - 15 years	12	14	12	13	13	13	12	13	12	13	17	17
16 years or more	27	26	25	26	25	25	24	22	22	35	36	32
Prefer not to say	*	-	-	*	-	-	*	-	-	*	-	-
No response provided	*	*	1	*	1	1	*	*	1	*	*	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>Median length of service (years)</i>	7	8	8	7	8	7	7	7	7	10	11	10

Source: ADF Census 2023, Defence Census 2019, Defence Census 2015. **Note:** - indicates a zero response and \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
 Base: Total Permanent ADF members



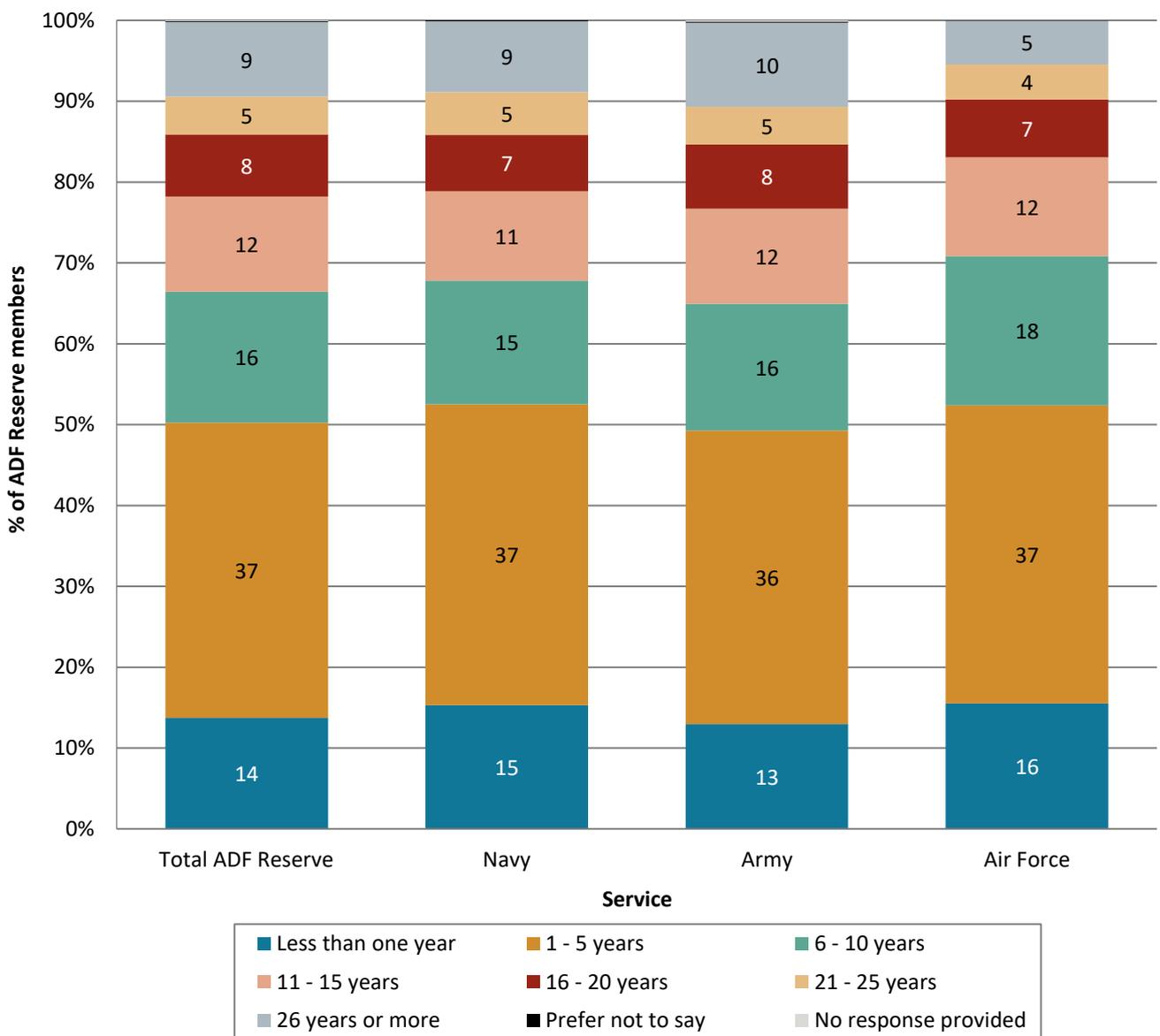
## ADF Reserve

### Reserve ONLY service

The results below relate to the total years of service of Reserve ADF members in the Reserve Force only: that is, they **exclude** any prior service in the Permanent ADF.

Within the ADF Reserve, Army Reserve had slightly smaller proportions with 5 years or less service (49%) when compared with Naval Reserve (53%) or Air Force Reserve (52%). Air Force Reserve had a higher proportion of members with 6-10 years' service (18%) compared with the Army Reserve (16%) and Naval Reserve (15%). Air Force Reserve had a lower proportion of members with 16 years or more service (17%) compared with Naval Reserve (21%) and Army Reserve (23%), as shown in Figure 8 below. In 2023, greater proportions of females had a shorter length of service (55% had served for 5 years or less) compared with males (49% for the same service duration).

**Figure 8: Length of service in the ADF Reserve amongst ADF(R) members by Service**



Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
 Base: Total Reserve ADF members N=20,852; Navy N=2,401, Army N=14,332, Air Force N=4,119



When 2023 figures were compared with the previous Defence Census results, there was an increase in the proportion of shorter service periods (5 years or less) across all Services between 2015 and 2023. Overall, the proportion of those serving for 16 years or more was relatively stable between 2023 and 2015, the exception being for Air Force Reserve, where proportions have steadily increased over time, as shown in Table 8 below. The median length of Reserve service decreased from 7 years to 5 years between 2015 and 2023. The largest change was in the Navy, with the median length of service decreasing from 9 years to 5 years over this period.

**Table 8: Length of ADF Reserve service amongst ADF(R) members by Service over time**

Length of Reserve service	Total ADF(R)			Navy			Army			Air Force		
	2023	2019	2015	2023	2019	2015	2023	2019	2015	2023	2019	2015
<i>N</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	20,852	17,326	16,816	2,401	1,626	1,317	14,332	12,706	12,876	4,119	2,996	2,623
5 years or less	50	46	40	53	41	33	49	47	41	52	46	36
6 - 10 years	16	19	25	15	17	24	16	19	23	18	22	33
11 - 15 years	12	14	13	11	17	16	12	13	12	12	17	17
16 years or more	22	21	21	21	25	25	23	21	22	17	14	12
Prefer not to say	*	-	-	*	-	-	*	-	-	*	-	-
No response provided	*	*	1	-	1	2	*	*	1	-	*	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>Median length of service (years)</i>	5	6	7	5	8	9	6	6	7	5	6	7

Source: ADF Census 2023, Defence Census 2019, Defence Census 2015. **Note:** - indicates a zero response and \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
 Base: Total Reserve ADF members

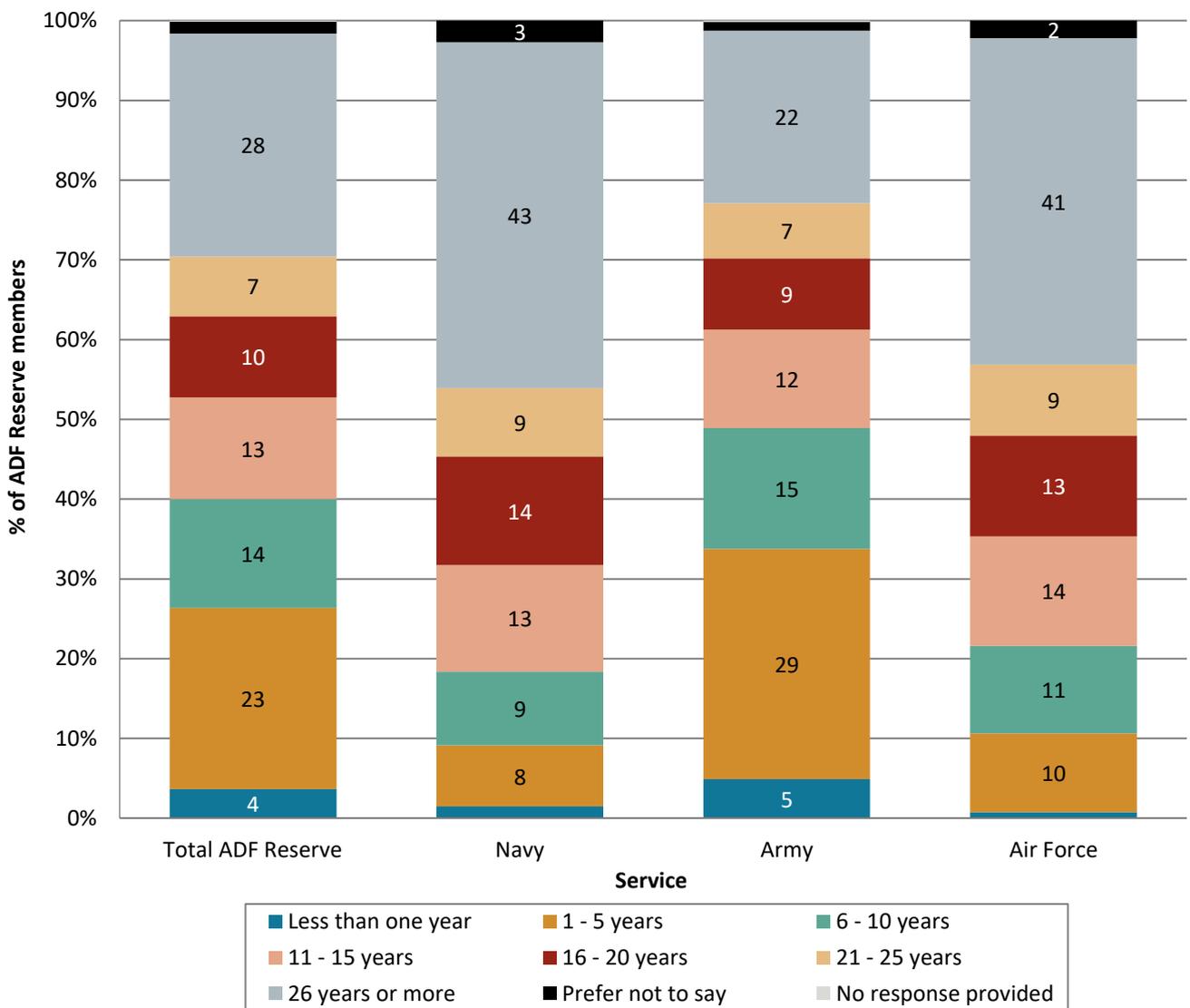


## Total Combined ADF(R)/ADF(P) Service

The analysis below is of **total** combined ADF service (that is ADF(R) **and** ADF(P) service) for current Reserve ADF members. When compared with results above, it can be noted that there is a considerable difference between Reserve only service and total ADF service. In **total** ADF service, there were much higher proportions of Reserve members with 26 years or more service across all Services, but most notably for Navy (43%) and Air Force (41%), compared with Army (22%), as shown in Figure 9 below. This outcome can be explained by the difference in the career model of the Army Reserve, which has the majority of members directly recruited into the Army Reserve with no prior Permanent service, whereas, the Naval and Air Force Reserve forces largely comprise members who have transferred from the Permanent force and therefore have relatively more years of Permanent service.

The median length of total combined ADF service for Army was much lower at 11 years than for Navy at 22 years and Air Force at 21 years, compared with 10 years, 28 years and 23 years respectively in 2019.

**Figure 9: Length of combined (ADF(P)/ADF(R)) service amongst ADF(R) members by Service**



Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
 Base: Total Reserve ADF members N=20,852; Navy N=2,401, Army N=14,332, Air Force N=4,119

There were some differences between males and females in terms of length of total combined ADF service, with a higher proportion of males having 26 years or more service (30%) compared with females (22%), whereas 32% of females had 5 years or less service compared with 25% of males. Overall, males had a higher median length of service at 15 years compared with females at 12 years.



# Permanent ADF Members

## Previous Defence Experience

In the 2023 Census, 18% of Permanent ADF members indicated that they had some form of previous Defence experience – this was the case for 17% of Navy members and 18% each for both Navy members and Air Force members. Overall, 12% of all Permanent ADF members indicated that they had previous experience in the Permanent ADF:

- 10% of Navy indicated that they had prior Navy experience;
- 10% of Army had prior Army experience; and
- 6% of Air Force had prior Air Force experience.

Air Force members showed the highest levels of cross-service experience, with 2% having previously been in the Navy, and 5% having previously been in the Army.

Furthermore, 6% of the Permanent ADF had previous experience in the ADF Reserve:

- 7% of Army members were previously in the Army Reserve;
- 2% of Navy members were previously in the Naval Reserve; and
- 2% of Air Force members were previously in the Air Force Reserve.

Four percent of Permanent ADF members had some other form of Defence-related experience, with foreign armed services experience (2%) being most commonly named. Across the Permanent ADF, 82% had no prior Defence or Defence-related experience, up from 77% in 2019.



## Previous Cadet and Gap Year Experience

More than one in five Permanent ADF members (22%) had participated in Defence programs or cadet organisations prior to joining the ADF. The most common programs were Australian Army Cadets and Australian Air Force Cadets or Air Training Corps (both 7%), while 2% had participated in the Naval Cadets. By Service:

- 14% of current Air Force members had participated in the Australian Air Force Cadets or Air Training Corps;
- 10% of Army members had participated in the Australian Army Cadets; and
- 7% of Navy members had participated in the Naval Cadets

In total, 4% of the current Permanent ADF members had ADF Gap Year experience, most commonly previous to the 2023 Gap Year (3%), as shown in Table 9 below.

**Table 9: Participation in Defence programs or Cadet organisations amongst ADF(P) members by Service**

Participation in Defence programs/Cadet organisations	Total ADF(P) %	Navy %	Army %	Air Force %
<i>N</i>	58,015	14,928	28,127	14,960
SERVOP G in 2023 (ADF Gap Year)	1	1	1	1
SERVOP G (ADF Gap Year) previously	3	3	3	4
<i>TOTAL participated in any SERVOP G (Gap Year)</i>	4	4	4	4
Indigenous Entry Programs	1	1	1	*
Defence Graduate Program	*	*	*	*
Defence Work Experience Program	2	3	2	2
Australian Naval Cadets	2	7	1	1
Australian Army Cadets	7	4	10	4
Australian Air Force Cadets or Air Training Corps	7	5	5	14
<i>TOTAL any program</i>	22	22	21	24
None of the above	77	77	78	76
No response provided	*	1	*	*

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Multiple answers allowed. Column totals may add to greater than 100%. \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%.

Base: Total Permanent ADF members

Males participated in a Defence program or cadet organisation prior to entering the ADF slightly more frequently than females (23%, compared with 20% for females). However, females (7%) were more than twice as likely than males (3%) to have previously or currently be participating in the ADF Gap Year program. A higher proportion of Officers had participated in some form of Defence program or cadet organisation than other ranks prior to entering the ADF (28% of both Senior Officers and Junior Officers, compared with 19% of SNCO/WO and 20% of OR/JNCO members). Five percent of OR/JNCO members had or were currently participating in an ADF Gap Year.

## Operational Service

For the 2023 Census, 'operationally deployed' or 'force assigned' meant being on ADF operations as part of a formed body, unit or Task Force either domestically or internationally. Force assignments may have included deployments as part of a formed body such as a unit or ship or platform to an Area of Operations, or an individual rotation. Respondents to the Census were instructed to include any deployment to Defence Assistance to Civil Community (DACC), or Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR) Operations e.g. Operation COVID-19 Assist and Bushfire Assist. In 2023, members were asked about deployments since the last Defence Census in 2019, similar to the four year time frame used in the previous Census. For the first time, members were asked separately about domestic and international deployments.

Since the 2019 Defence Census, 51% of all Permanent ADF members had been operationally deployed one or more times. One in five (20%) had been operationally deployed once, 13% twice and 7% three times. Overall, 11% had been operationally deployed four or more times since the last Census.

Males (52%) were more likely to have been operationally deployed since the 2019 Defence Census than were females (46%). By rank, SNCO/WO members (57%) were more likely to have been operationally deployed since the last Census than all other rank groups, with OR/JNCO at 51%, Junior Officers at 49% and Senior Officers at 35%. Navy members (63%) were more likely to have been operationally deployed than Army (48%) or Air Force members (46%).

Just under two in five (38%) Permanent ADF members had been operationally deployed domestically since the last Defence Census, while 27% had deployed internationally. A higher proportion of Navy members were deployed domestically (45%) and internationally (40%) compared with Army (37% and 21% respectively) and Air Force (32% and 26% respectively). Males had slightly higher proportions deployed domestically and internationally (39% and 28%, respectively) than females (34% and 24%).

Of those Permanent ADF members who had been operationally deployed since the 2019 Defence Census (N=29,642), 43% had been operationally deployed for 1-2 months, while 38% had been operationally deployed for 2-4 months and 36% for less than one month, as shown in Table 10 below.

**Table 10: Number of operational deployments as a Permanent ADF member since last Defence Census amongst ADF(P) members by Duration of deployment**

Number of operational deployments since last Defence Census	< 1 month %	1 - 2 months %	2 - 4 months	4 - 6 months	6 - 8 months %	> 8 months %
N	29,642	29,642	29,642	29,642	29,642	29,642
1	21	25	23	11	10	3
2	7	10	9	3	2	1
3	3	4	3	1	*	*
4 - 6	3	3	3	1	*	*
7 or more	2	1	*	*	*	*
<i>TOTAL deployed for this duration since last Defence Census</i>	36	43	38	16	13	5
Not operationally deployed for this duration since last Defence Census	64	57	62	84	87	95
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
Base: Total Permanent ADF members deployed since the last Defence Census (N=29,642)

## Operational deployments in last 12 months

Within the last 12 months (from the ADF Census date of April 2023), 27% of all Permanent ADF members had been operationally deployed. Navy members were most likely (38%) to have been deployed in the last 12 months before the ADF Census, compared with Army and Air Force (both 23%). Less than 1% of members had been operationally deployed for 9 months or more in the last 12 months.

By rank, OR/JNCO (30%), SNCO/WO (25%) and Junior Officers (23%), were more likely to have been operationally deployed in the last 12 months than Senior Officers (9%). Males (28%) were more likely to have been operationally deployed in the last 12 months than females (23%).

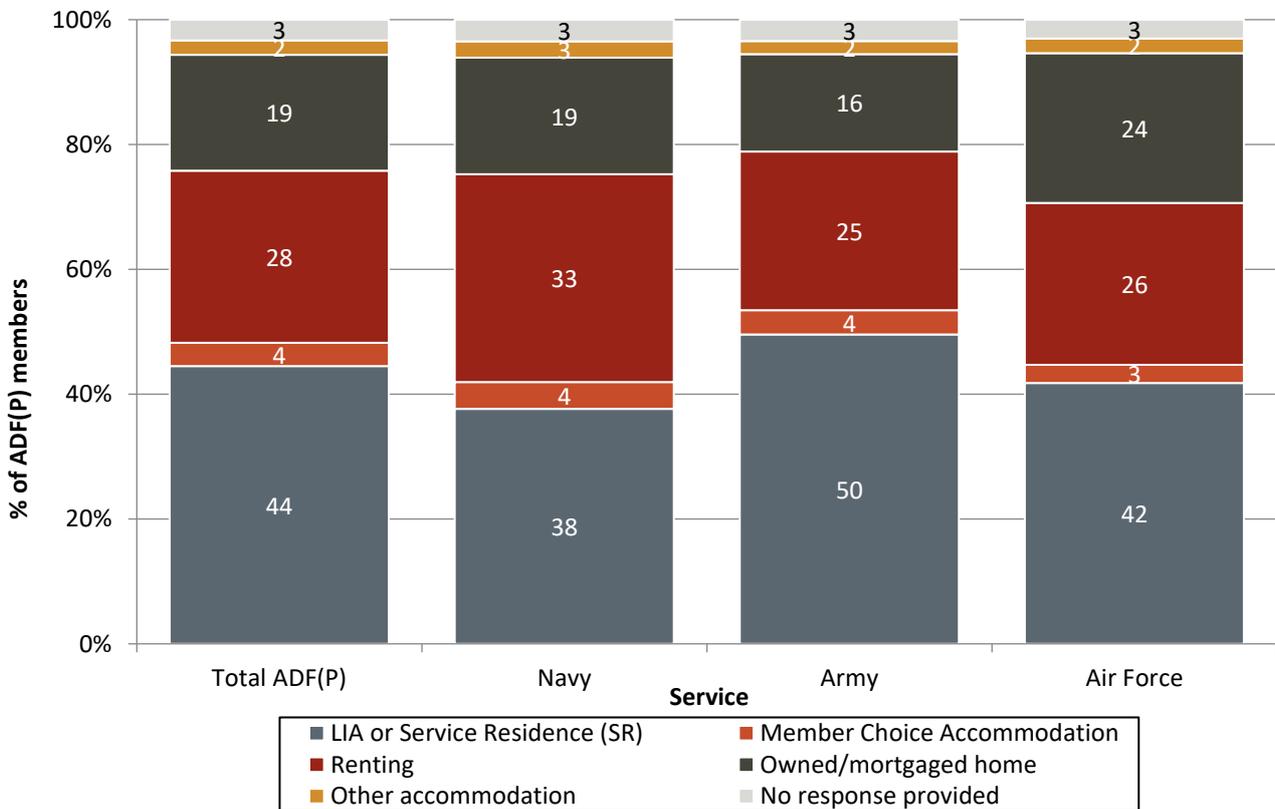
## Accommodation

At the time of the 2023 ADF Census, 44% of Permanent ADF members indicated that they lived in Service-provided accommodation – 23% in Service Residence (SR) - off base, 4% in Service Residence (SR) - on base and 17% in Living-in Accommodation (LIA) (Service Barracks/Mess). This proportion shows a decline from 2019 (47%), and continues the overall downward trend from the high of 59% recorded in 2003. In 2023, private rental accommodation with Rent Allowance (RA) (26%), SR off base (23%), LIA (17%) and a home that is being bought or paid off (17%) were the most common types of accommodation for Permanent ADF members.

As shown in Figure 10 below, Army members were more likely to live in Service provided accommodation (50%) than members of the other Services (42% for Air Force, 38% for Navy). One third (33%) of Navy members lived in privately rented accommodation, as did 26% of Air Force members and 25% of Army. Air Force members (24%) were more likely to be living in a home they were buying/paying off or fully paid off than Navy (19%) or Army (16%) members.

OR/JNCO members were more likely to live in LIA (23%) than all other rank groups, and SNCO/WO members were more likely than other rank groups to live in SR off base (34%). Senior Officers were most likely to be living in a home they were buying or paying off (44%) and also had the highest proportion of members living in a home that they owned that was fully paid off (5%) compared with other rank groups.

**Figure 10: Type of accommodation used by ADF(P) members by Service**



Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
 Base: Total Permanent ADF members N=58,015; Navy N=14,928, Army N=28,127, Air Force N=14,960



## Work Life Balance

On average, Permanent ADF members worked a median of 40 hours per week in their ADF job – 34% worked 41-50 hours per week while 42% worked 31-40 hours per week. This varied by Service, with Navy and Air Force having a lower median (both 40 hours) than Army (43 hours).

There was a correlation between the number of hours usually worked per week and a Permanent ADF members' rank; generally, as rank increased so did the hours worked:

- Almost half of OR/JNCO (48%) worked between 31 and 40 hours, with a median of 40 hours per week.
- SNCO/WO were most likely to work between 31 and 40 hours (41%), with a median of 42 hours per week
- Junior Officers were most likely to work between 41 and 50 hours (41%), with a median of 45 hours per week
- Almost half of all Senior Officers (47%) worked between 41 and 50 hours per week, with a median of 50 hours per week.

Across the Permanent ADF, males worked slightly longer hours per week than females. The proportion that worked between 31 and 40 hours was higher among females than males (49%, compared with 41% of males), while the proportion that worked between 41 and 50 hours was lower among females than males (30%, compared with 35% of males). The median number of hours usually worked by males was 42 hours per week, compared with 40 hours for females.

More than a third of Permanent ADF members work from home at least one day per week (36%), with proportions slightly higher for Air Force (42%) than for Navy (36%) and Army (33%). By rank, a higher proportion of SNCO/WO (52%) and Senior Officers (50%) worked from home at least one day a week, compared with Junior Officers (43%) and OR/JNCO (26%). Females (45%) were more likely than males (34%) to work from home at least one day a week.

In 2023, the majority of Permanent ADF members (55%) indicated that the amount of time they work from home has stayed the same, compared to 12 months ago. Just over a quarter of Permanent ADF members indicated that the amount of time they work from home had decreased compared with 12 months ago (27%), with Air Force having the highest proportion indicating so (33%). One in six (16%) indicated that the amount of time they work from home has increased compared with 12 months ago, with proportions similar across Services.



More than three-quarters (76%) of Permanent ADF members spent at least one night away from home on Defence service (including deployments, service at sea, shift work and training) in the last 12 months, spending a median of 32 nights away from home overall. Navy and Army members (77%) were more likely than Air Force (72%) to have spent at least one night away from home on Defence service. The median number of nights spent away from home was substantially higher for Navy (50 nights) than Army (35 nights) or Air Force (24 nights). Navy members were considerably more likely than members of the other Services to have spent more than 150 nights away from home in the last 12 months – 28% of Navy members spent more than 150 nights away, compared with 12% of Army members and 10% of Air Force members.

Males (77%) were more likely than females (69%) to have spent at least one night away from home on Defence service in the previous 12 months. The median number of nights spent away from home among males was 36 nights, compared with 21 nights among females. By rank, Senior Officers (87%) were most likely to have spent at least one night away from home on Defence service, compared to 82% for SNCO/WO members, 80% for Junior Officers, and 71% for OR/JNCO members. However, the median number of nights spent away from home was higher for OR/JNCO members and Junior Officers (each 35 nights), compared to 30 nights for SNCO/WO members and 25 nights for Senior Officers.





Across the Permanent ADF, one in six (17%) of members had used any flexible working arrangements (FWA), either formally or informally, in the last 12 months, while 78% had not applied for any type of FWA. A higher proportion of Air Force members (25%) successfully applied for and used a flexible working arrangement than Navy (20%) or Army (12%), as shown in Table 11 below.

Females (25%) were more likely than males (15%) to have used a flexible working arrangement in the last 12 months. Analysis by rank revealed that Senior Officers (33%) were more likely than all other rank groups to have used any flexible working arrangements in the last 12 months, compared with 28% of SNCO/WO, 24% of Junior Officers, and 10% of OR/JNCO members.

**Table 11: Application for and use of flexible working arrangements in ADF(P) by Service**

FWA applied for	Total ADF(P) %	Navy %	Army %	Air Force %
<i>N</i>	58,015	14,928	28,127	14,960
Yes – requested and used informal flexible work arrangements	10	11	8	13
Yes – requested and used formal flexible work arrangements	8	10	5	13
<i>TOTAL used any flexible work arrangements</i>	17	20	12	25
Yes – requested informal flexible work arrangements, but was rejected	2	2	1	2
Yes – requested formal flexible work arrangements, but was rejected	1	1	1	1
No – have not applied for any flexible work arrangements	78	75	84	70
No response provided	3	3	3	2

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Multiple answers allowed. Column totals may add to greater than 100%  
Base: Total Permanent ADF members

Of those members who had used an FWA in the last 12 months (N=9,965), the most common types were Home Located Work (HLW) (61%), followed by Variable Work Hours (VWH) (54%), and Alternate Located Work (ALW) (15%). HLW was used by more Navy members (66%) than Army or Air Force members (both 59%), while VWH were more commonly used by Air Force members (61%) than Navy (54%) or Army members (47%).

Females were slightly more likely than males to have used HLW (63% compared with 60%) and VWH (56% compared with 53%). HLW was more commonly used by Senior Officers and Junior Officers (76% and 73% respectively), compared to SNCO/WO and OR/JNCO (64% and 40%), whereas OR/JNCO were the most common rank group to have used VWH (64%).

Across all Services, the main reasons for applying for an FWA, as nominated by 47% of those who had applied for an FWA (N=11,160), were to assist with caring for children (Navy, 44%; Army, 51%; Air Force, 46%), followed by 39% indicating that FWA was applied for to improve work/life balance (Navy, 44%; Army, 31%; Air Force, 41%).

Males were more likely than females to indicate family reasons/MWD(U) (21% compared to 15%) and to assist with caring for children (49% compared with 43%) as a reason for applying for FWA, while females were slightly more likely than males to request an FWA to improve work life balance (41% compared to 38%) or to fulfil education or training aspirations (22% compared to 17%). OR/JNCO members were more likely than other rank groups to have requested an FWA to fulfil education or training aspirations (25%), followed by Junior Officers (22%), SNCO/WO (11%) and Senior Officers (8%). Junior Officers were the most common rank group to have requested an FWA to improve work life balance (43%, compared to 40% for SNCO/WO, 38% for Senior Officers, and 33% for OR/JNCO).

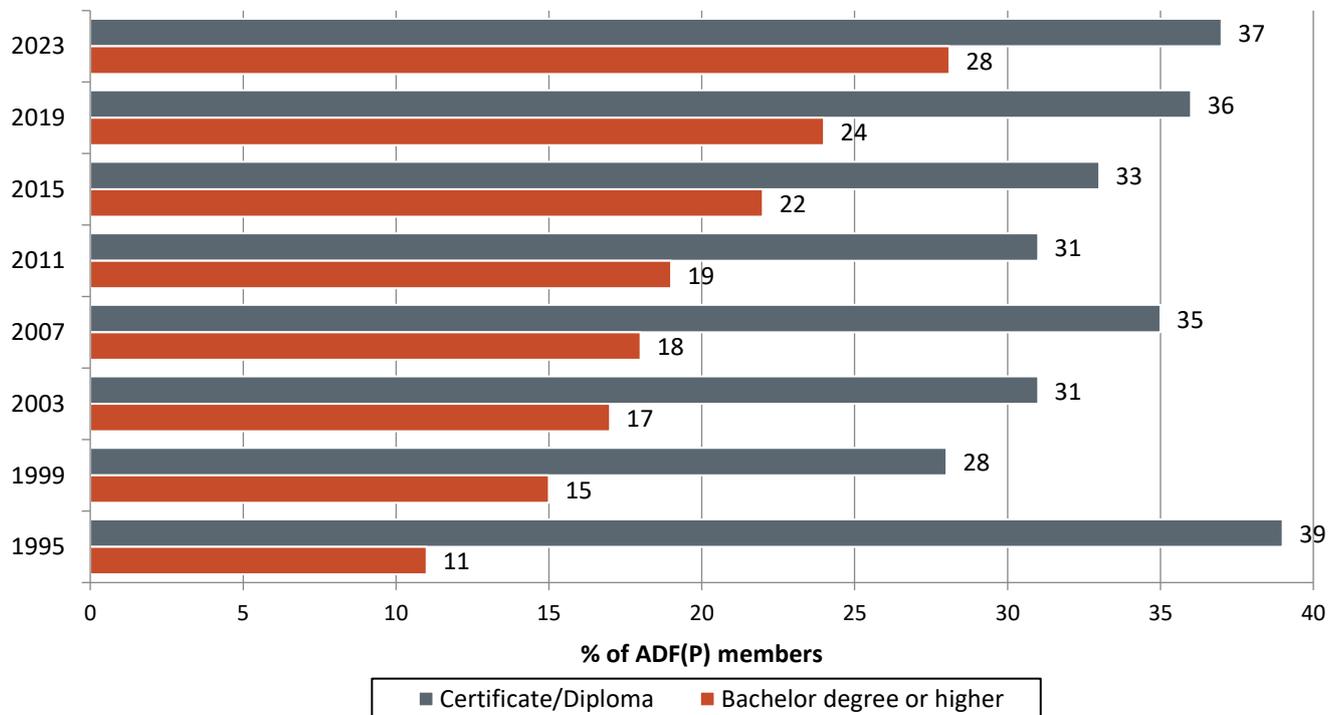
## Education and Training

Across the Permanent ADF, the highest level of completed education was most commonly some form of post-school education (65%), with 35% having completed some form of secondary education as their highest education level. Army had the highest proportion of members who have completed Year 12 or less (41%), compared with 33% for Navy and 25% for Air Force. Air Force had the highest proportion of members with a Bachelor degree or higher (35%), compared to 27% for Navy and 25% for Army.

Females were slightly more likely than males to have post-school education (66% compared with 65%) and were particularly more likely to have a Bachelor Degree (20% of females and 15% of males), whilst males were more likely to have a Trade/Vocational Certificate (24%) compared with 19% of females. The highest level of completed education increased with rank. OR/JNCO were most likely to have completed year 12 or equivalent (38%) and SNCO/WO a Diploma or Advanced Diploma (33%). Amongst Officers, 44% of Junior Officers had obtained a Bachelor degree and 87% of Senior Officers had obtained a Postgraduate Award.

The proportion of Permanent ADF members with a Bachelor degree or higher as their highest completed post-school qualification has increased steadily over time. Certificate/diploma qualifications varied slightly between Census years but remained around one third of members since 2003, as shown below in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Highest completed post-school education in ADF(P) over time**



Source: ADF Census 2023, Defence Censuses 2019, 2015, 2011, 2007, 2003, 1999, 1995

Base: Total Permanent ADF members 2023 N=58,015, 2019 N=58,476, 2015 N=58,751, 2011 N=58,767, 2007 N=51,093, 2003 N=50,670, 1999 N=52,232, 1995 N=58,384

## STEM Education

In the 2023 Census, Permanent ADF members were asked if they had any qualifications in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) related subjects<sup>9</sup> at any level, not just their highest level of education. Three in five Permanent ADF members with a post-school education (N=37,704) indicated that they had some form of STEM education (60%). This was slightly lower for those in Army (55%) than for Air Force (63%) or Navy (64%).

Males with post-school education (64%) were far more likely to have any STEM related qualifications than similarly educated females (45%). By rank, the proportion of Permanent ADF members with any STEM qualifications tended to decrease with rank, with 63% of OR/JNCO having any STEM qualifications, compared to 58% of Junior Officers and 57% of both SNCO/WO and Senior Officers.

The STEM qualifications most commonly held were Trade/Vocational Certificate (Cert I – IV) level or equivalent (47%) followed by a Bachelor degree (29%). Over one in five (22%) of those with a STEM qualification indicated it was a Diploma/Advanced Diploma level, while 15% held a STEM related postgraduate award. Air Force members (35%) were more likely than Navy or Army members (both 26%) to have STEM qualifications at the Bachelor degree level, while Trade/Vocational Certificate was more common among Army members (51%) and Diploma/Advance Diploma more common among Navy members (29%), as shown in Table 12 below.

**Table 12: Level of STEM qualifications of ADF(P) by Service**

Level of all STEM qualifications	Total ADF(P) with any STEM qualifications	Navy	Army	Air Force
<i>N</i>	%	%	%	%
	22,538	6,377	9,046	7,115
Trade/Vocational Certificate (Cert I - IV) or equivalent	47	45	51	43
Diploma/Advanced Diploma	22	29	19	20
Bachelor Degree (incl. with Honours)	29	26	26	35
Postgraduate Award (e.g. Masters, PhD)	15	15	15	16
No response provided	-	-	-	-

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Multiple answers allowed. Column totals may add to greater than 100%. - indicates a zero response

Base: Total Permanent ADF members with STEM qualifications (N=22,538)

Of those with any STEM qualifications (39% of all Permanent ADF members; N=22,538), the most common subjects studied were:

- Engineering and Related Technologies (56%);
- Information Technology (including Cyber) (14%); and
- Natural and Physical Sciences (10%).

Members of the Army were less likely than those of other Services to have studied Engineering and Related Technologies (45%, compared with 66% for Navy and 60% for Air Force), but were more likely to have studied Information Technology (including Cyber) (16%, compared with 11% for Navy and 13% for Air Force).

Males (62%) were more likely to have studied Engineering and Related Technologies than were females (24%). Females, conversely, were more likely to have studied Nursing or Other Health Related subjects (21% and 25% respectively) than were males (3% and 5% respectively). By rank, SNCO/WO were the most likely to have studied Engineering and Related Technologies (68%), and Officer ranks were more likely than others to have studied Natural and Physical Sciences (24% of Senior Officers and 20% of Junior Officers).

<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of this Census, STEM qualifications include Natural and Physical Sciences, Information Technology (including Cyber), Engineering, Architecture, Agriculture and Environmental Studies, Medicine, Nursing, and other Health related studies (including Psychology)

Permanent ADF members were asked if they possessed any STEM skills without formal qualification. Three in ten (30%) Permanent ADF members indicated that they possess an informal STEM skill – 35% of both Navy and Air Force and 26% of Army. The most common STEM skill was Electronic skills (systems, communications) (12%), followed closely by Technical skills (instruments, machinery) (11%) and Data skills (information services, analytics, excluding cyber) (9%).

A higher proportion of males possessed a STEM skill without a formal qualification than females (32% and 24%, respectively). By rank, Officers were more likely to possess STEM skills (34% for Junior Officers and 35% of Senior Officers), compared with SNCO/WO (31%) and OR/JNCO (28%).

Of all Permanent ADF members, 13% were studying for a STEM related qualification at the time of the 2023 ADF Census.



## Community involvement

Permanent ADF members were asked to indicate how often they did voluntary work through an organisation or group in the last 12 months. Just under a quarter (23%) of all Permanent ADF members indicated that they had done some voluntary work in that period. A higher proportion of Air Force and Navy members (26% and 24% respectively) than Army members (20%) had done some voluntary work.

Just under two in five (38%) of Permanent ADF members were actively involved in one or more community or social groups. That involvement was most commonly with a sporting group or club (23%). The overall level of community/social group involvement varied by Service with a slightly higher proportion of Air Force and Navy members (41% and 40%, respectively) than Army members (35%) involved in community or social groups.



## Partners of Permanent ADF Members

Of those Permanent Force members who had a spouse or partner (65% of Permanent ADF members; N=37,942), 84% indicated that their spouse or partner was working (up from 79% in 2019). Around one in five (15%) indicated that their partner was not employed; this included 6% not employed and seeking work, 8% not seeking work and 1% retired. There was little difference between Services in the proportions of members whose spouse or partner was employed.

Members with an employed spouse or partner (N=31,996) were asked to characterise the type of job in which their partner was employed. Overall, Permanent ADF members indicated that their partners were employed as:

- Professionals (32%);
- Community and Personal Service workers (19%);
- Clerical and Administrative workers (15%);
- Managers (13%);
- Technicians and Trades workers (10%);
- Sales workers (5%);
- Labourers (3%); and
- Machinery Operators and Drivers (2%).

One fifth of Permanent ADF members with an employed spouse/partner (20%) indicated that their partner was employed by Defence – 17% indicated that their partner was serving in the Permanent ADF, 1% had a partner serving in the ADF Reserve and 3% had a partner employed as a Defence APS. Army members (14%) were less likely than Navy (18%) or Air Force (21%) to have a partner who was in the Permanent ADF.

Almost four in five (79%) of Permanent ADF members with an employed spouse/partner indicated that their partner was employed *outside* of Defence – the majority (56%) for an *other* (i.e. not Government or Defence related) employer, including being self-employed; while 19% were employed by a non-Defence related Government department or agency and 4% had a Defence-related employer, as shown in Table 13 below.

**Table 13: ADF(P) partners' main employer by Service**

Partner main employer	Total ADF(P) with employed partner	Navy	Army	Air Force
	%	%	%	%
N	29,057	7,026	14,097	7,934
Permanent Force	17	18	14	21
Reserve Force	1	1	1	1
Defence APS	3	3	2	3
<b>TOTAL ADF + Defence APS</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>25</b>
Government (non-Defence) (including Commonwealth, State and Local Government)	19	17	20	19
Defence Related Employer	4	4	3	4
Other employer, including self-employed	56	57	58	52
<b>TOTAL employed outside ADF/Defence APS</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>75</b>
No response provided	1	1	1	*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
Base: Total Permanent ADF members with an employed spouse/partner (N=29,057)

In the 2023 ADF Census, 92% of all members whose spouse/partner was employed outside of the Permanent ADF (N = 24,012), indicated that their partner worked for an employer for a wage or salary, 4% worked in their own business without employees, 1% in their own business with employees, and 2% were in another form of employment. More than half (58%) indicated that their partner was employed full-time, 22% indicated their partner was employed part-time, 13% had a partner employed on a casual basis and 7% had a partner employed on a contract basis.



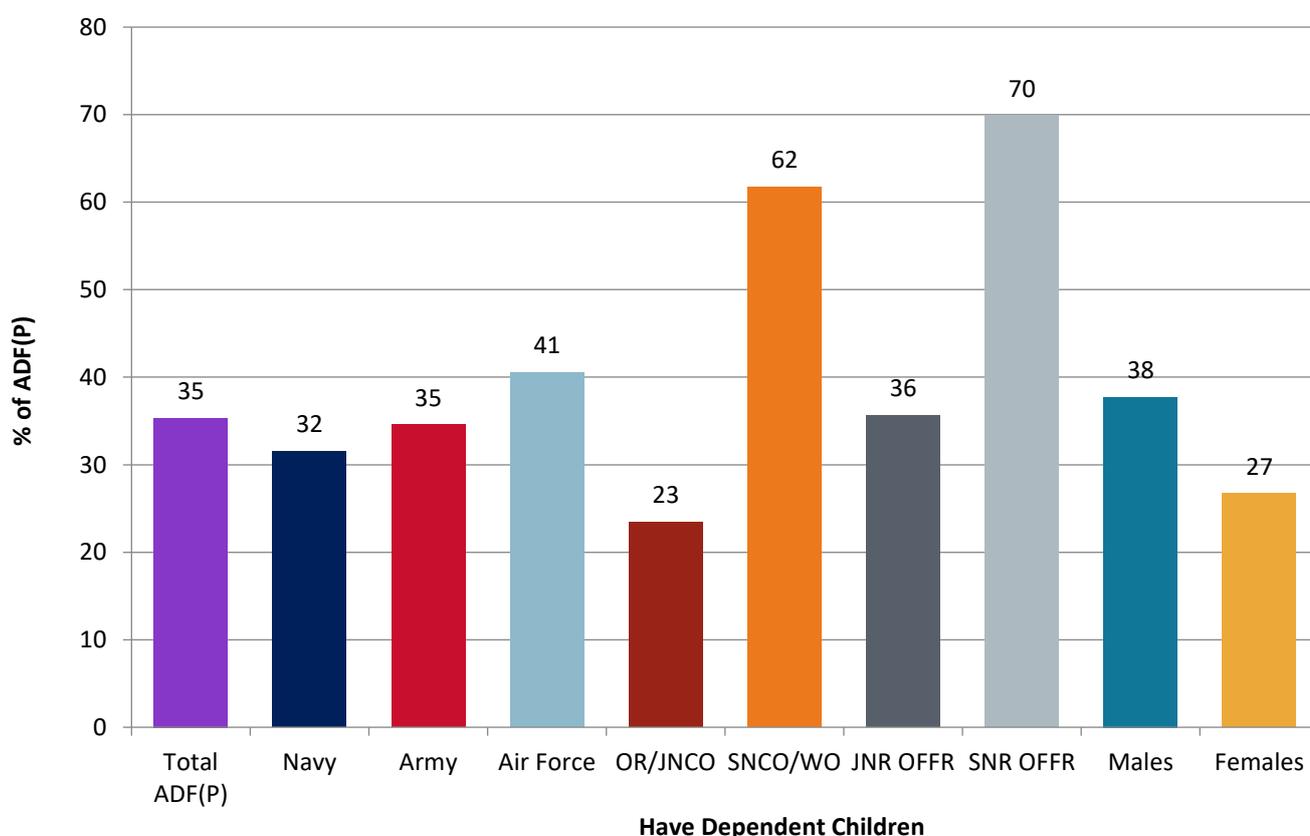


## Children of Permanent ADF Members

For the purpose of the 2023 ADF Census, a dependent child was defined as a member’s own child (including an adopted child, stepchild, child of their partner (including de facto relationships), ex-nuptial child, foster-child or ward) who was financially dependent on them, and who is aged 21 or less; or is a full-time student aged 25 years or less; or has a disability/infirmity. Overall, just over a third (35%) of Permanent ADF members had dependent children at the time of the 2023 ADF Census. This proportion was higher amongst Air Force (41%) than Army (35%) or Navy (32%).

The proportion of Senior Officers with dependent children was almost double the proportion of Junior Officers (70% and 36% respectively). Similarly, the proportion of SNCO/WO members with dependent children was more than double that for OR/JNCO members (62% and 23% respectively). Male Permanent ADF members (38%) were more likely to have dependent children than were females (27%), as shown below in Figure 12.

**Figure 12: Dependent children in ADF(P) by Service, Rank and Gender**



Source: ADF Census 2023

Base: Total Permanent ADF members N=58,015; Navy N=14,928, Army N=28,127, Air Force N=14,960; OR/JNCO N=31,250; SNCO/WO N=10,392, JNR OFFR N=13,689, SNR OFFR N=2,684; Males N=45,539, Females N=11,819

Among Permanent ADF members with any dependent children, 7% were sole parents. This was consistent across the Services. By rank, a higher proportion of OR/JNCO (10%) were sole parents compared with the higher ranks (SNCO/WO, 6%; Junior Officers, 5%; Senior Officers, 4%). There was also a difference between genders, with one in five (20%) female Permanent ADF members with dependent children indicating they were a sole parent, compared to 5% of males.

Of the Permanent ADF members with dependent children (N=20,499), 94% had dependent children who lived with them for 90 nights or more per year, and 16% had dependent children who lived with them for less than 90 nights per year. Please note that some members indicated that they had dependent children for both 90 nights or more and less than 90 nights per year (11%) i.e. over eight in ten *solely* had dependent children for 90 nights or more (84%) and 6% *solely* had dependent children for less than 90 nights.

## Children's education

Of those Permanent ADF members who had dependent children living with them for 90 nights or more per year (N=19,301), almost four in five (79%) said their child(ren) were attending some form of educational institution (preschool/kindergarten, infants, primary or secondary school, full-time TAFE, university or equivalent), and 20% said that none of their child(ren) attended an educational institution. Over two-fifths (42%) had dependent children that attended infants or primary school, followed by secondary or middle school (28%) and preschool/kindergarten (24%).

Air Force members were more likely to have children in secondary or middle school (33%), compared to Army (28%) and Navy (25%). More than one in three (36%) of Permanent ADF members with dependent children living with them for 90 nights or more indicated that they had at least one dependent child who did not attend an educational institution.

Around a third (34%) of Permanent ADF members with dependent children living with them for 90 nights or more per year receiving some form of education (N=15,264) were not aware that ADF education assistance was available. Over half (54%) percent reported that at least one child did not receive any education assistance, and 11% indicated that education assistance was 'not applicable' for at least one of their children. The total proportion of Permanent ADF members with dependent children for 90 nights or more per year in education who received ADF education assistance for at least one child decreased from 3% in 2019 to 2% in 2023. One percent received tutoring assistance in a new locality. All other education assistance types were received by less than half a percent of members.

Despite the fact that males were generally more likely than females to be *unaware* that ADF education assistance was available, use of the assistance was similar for both genders, with 2% of both males and females indicating that they had at least one child who had received some form of ADF education assistance.

## Childcare

Overall, 54% of Permanent ADF members with dependent children living with them for 90 nights or more per year (N=19,301) required childcare for their child(ren); 43% were currently using childcare while 11% required childcare but were not currently using or it was not available. A total of 45% did not require childcare. There was little difference in the childcare requirements across the Services.

Females with dependent children living with them for 90 nights or more per year were considerably more likely than males to require childcare for those children (66% of females compared with 52% of males) and were more likely to be currently using childcare (59% of females compared with 41% of males). Analysis by rank group showed OR/JNCO members (63%) and Junior Officers (59%) were more likely to require childcare for their dependent children living with them for 90 nights or more per year than were SNCO/WO (44%) or Senior Officers (42%).

Those Permanent ADF members with dependent children living with them for 90 nights or more per year who required childcare for their child(ren) (N=10,473) were asked a series of questions in relation to the childcare they used. The most commonly utilised forms of childcare were:

- Childcare centres (46%);
- Spouse/partner (37%);
- After-school care (35%);
- Before-school care (26%);
- Vacation care (22%); and
- Being looked after by relatives or friends in an unpaid capacity (19%).

Three percent of members said that childcare was not available to them for at least one of their children. The types of childcare utilised was similar across Services.

Males with dependent children living with them for 90 nights or more per year and requiring childcare were noticeably more likely than females in the same situation to have a spouse/partner providing childcare (40% of males compared with 23% of females). Analysis by rank group showed OR/JNCO members (51%) and Junior Officers (48%) were more likely to utilise childcare centres than SNCO/WO members (41%) and Senior Officers (24%).

Almost six in ten (58%) of Permanent ADF members requiring childcare for their dependent children who lived with them for 90 nights or more per year (N=10,473) indicated that their current childcare arrangements fully met their needs. A slightly lower proportion of Navy members (55%) indicated that their needs were fully met than did members in Army (59%) and Air Force (58%). Over two in five (42%) of members requiring childcare indicated that their needs were only partially met or not met at all, compared with 40% in 2019.

Females with dependent children living with them for 90 nights or more per year and requiring childcare were slightly more likely than males in the same situation to say their current childcare arrangements fully met their needs (61% of females compared with 57% of males), as shown in Table 14 below.

**Table 14: How well childcare needs are met for ADF(P) by Service and Gender**

How well childcare needs are met	Total ADF(P) with dependent children 90+ nights requiring childcare	Navy	Army	Air Force	Males	Females	2019 Total ADF(P) with dependent children 90+ nights requiring childcare
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>N</i>	10,473	2,421	4,979	3,073	8,381	2,009	11,355
Fully	58	55	59	58	57	61	59
Partially	34	36	33	35	34	34	34
Not at all	8	9	9	7	9	5	6
<i>TOTAL childcare needs not fully met</i>	42	45	41	41	43	38	40
No response provided	*	*	*	*	*	*	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: ADF Census 2023, Defence Census 2019. **Note:** \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding

Base: Total Permanent ADF members with dependent children living with them for 90 nights or more per year who require childcare (N=10,473)

Those whose childcare needs were not fully met (N=4,403) were asked why their childcare arrangements did not fully meet their needs. The most commonly given reasons were that childcare was not affordable (46%), or that childcare places were not available (i.e. lack of supply) or not open early enough (both 27%). Navy (46%) and Army (47%) members were more likely than Air Force (43%) members to say that childcare was not affordable. Males whose childcare needs were not fully met were more likely than females to cite affordability as the main reason (47% of males compared with 40% of females), whereas females (38%) were more likely than males (25%) to say childcare services were not open early enough.

## Other Dependants

The proportion of Permanent ADF members who indicated that they had other dependants (i.e. not their spouse/partner or dependent children mentioned earlier) rose from 8% in 2019 to 12% in 2023. The 12% of Permanent ADF members who had other dependants was comprised of:

- 8% with dependent parents;
- 3% with dependent parents of their partner;
- 1% with dependent grandparents; and
- 3% with other dependent relatives, including older children not counted elsewhere in the Census.

There was little variation in the proportions of members with other dependants between Services and rank groups. A large majority (83%) of Permanent ADF members indicated that they had no other dependants.

## Dependants with special needs

For the 2023 ADF Census, a dependant with special needs was someone who had been formally diagnosed by a specialist as having one or more special needs. A dependant with special needs could include a member's spouse/partner, child(ren) or other dependants living with them.

In total, 8% of Permanent ADF members (up from 7% in 2019) had dependants with special needs living with them. A slightly higher proportion of Air Force members (10%) had one or more dependants with special needs living with them than did Army (8%) and Navy (7%) members. Most commonly, dependants with special needs were children (6%), followed by spouse/partner (2%) and other dependants (1%).

Males (9%) were more likely than females (6%) to have dependants with special needs living with them. Senior ranks were more likely than junior ranks to have dependants with special needs living with them (16% for Senior Officers and 15% for SNCO/WO, compared with 7% for Junior Officers and 5% for OR/JNCO).

Of those members who had dependants with special needs living with them (N=4,617), the most common types of special needs diagnosed were:

- Social, emotional or behavioural needs (43%);
- Autism (40%);
- A medical condition, illness or disability (35%);
- Sensory (28%); and
- Specific learning difficulties (23%).

There was little difference in the types of diagnosed special needs across the Services.



## Permanent ADF members categorised as Members with Dependants (Unaccompanied)

Defence adopted a new categorisation framework in July 2023. As the ADF Census was collected from April 2023 the categorisation questions used the previous terminology and are reported in the Census results, as shown in the table on page 13.

Members categorised as a Member with Dependants (Unaccompanied) (MWD(U)) comprised 7% of the Permanent ADF. Navy members were marginally more likely (8%) to be categorised as MWD(U) than members in Army or Air Force (each 7%).

Almost all Permanent ADF members categorised as MWD(U) (N=4,097) indicated that they were in a relationship (97%) – 62% were married, 34% were in an ADF-recognised partnership and 1% were in a partnership that was not ADF-recognised.

Just under half of MWD(U) members (48%) had dependent children, 52% did not. MWD(U) members in the Air Force (45%) were slightly less likely than their counterparts in the Navy or Army (both 49%) to have dependent children. Males categorised as MWD(U) were much more likely than female MWD(U) members to have dependent children (51% compared with 31%).

Around one in six (16%) Permanent ADF members categorised as MWD(U) had other dependants (such as parents, spouse/partner's parents, grandparents and other relatives). There was little variation in the proportions with other dependants between Services.

In total, 12% of Permanent ADF members categorised as MWD(U) had dependants with special needs. MWD(U) members in the Air Force (14%) were slightly more likely than Navy (11%) or Army (12%) members to have dependants with special needs.

**Table 15: Months categorised as MWD(U) in ADF(P) by Service**

Months categorised as MWD(U)	Total ADF(P) categorised as MWD(U)	Navy	Army	Air Force
<i>N</i>	%	%	%	%
	4,097	1,254	1,842	1,002
Less than 3 months	14	15	13	13
3 - 6 months	26	23	29	25
7 - 12 months	11	12	9	11
13 - 18 months	19	15	20	20
19 - 24 months	6	7	5	6
25 - 36 months (2 - 3yrs)	11	11	11	12
4 - 5 years	6	6	5	7
5+ years	7	11	6	5
No response provided	*	-	*	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** - indicates a zero response and \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding

Base: Total Permanent ADF members categorised as MWD(U) (N=4,097)

In 2023, Permanent ADF members categorised as MWD(U) had most commonly held this categorisation for either 3-6 months (26%) or 13-18 months (19%), followed by less than 3 months (14%). Navy MWD(U) members (27%) were more commonly categorised as MWD(U) for more than 24 months, compared to Air Force MWD(U) members (25%) and Army MWD(U) members (23%), as shown in Table 15 above. Male MWD(U) personnel were markedly more likely than female MWD(U) personnel to have been categorised as MWD(U) for more than 24 months (26% compared with 15%).

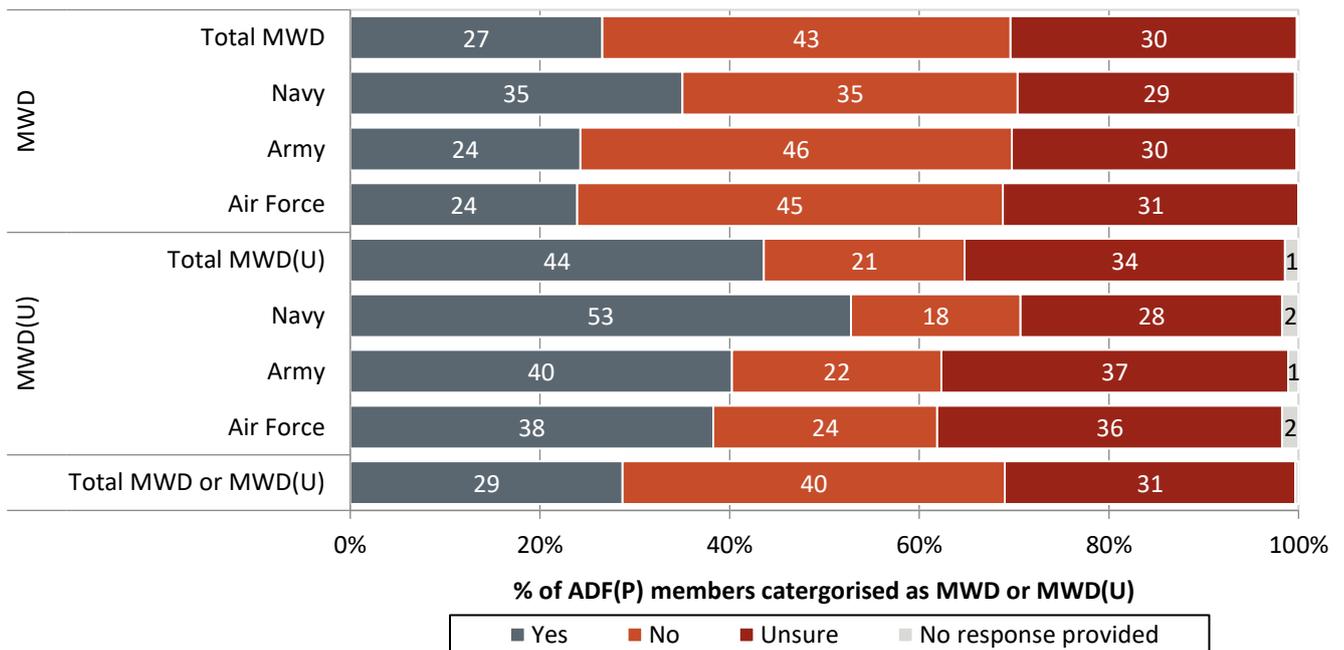
In total, 51% of those currently categorised as MWD(U) indicated they intended to continue with the categorisation – 47% so that their family could stay in their current location and 5% would continue but not in their family’s current location. Almost three in ten (28%) said they did not intend to continue their MWD(U) categorisation and one in five (20%) were unsure.

Those currently categorised as MWD(U) and those categorised as a Member with Dependants (MWD) (total N=32,540) were asked if they could foresee that they might apply (or re-apply) for MWD(U) categorisation in the future. Overall, 29% of MWD/MWD(U) Permanent ADF members indicated they might apply or re-apply for MWD(U) categorisation, 40% said they would not (re)apply and 31% were unsure (see Figure 13 below).

Within the **MWD(U) component** of the Permanent ADF, 44% thought they might re-apply for MWD(U) categorisation in the future; this was the case for 53% of Navy MWD(U) members, 40% of Army MWD(U) members and 38% of Air Force MWD(U) members.

Within the **MWD component** of the Permanent ADF, 27% thought they might apply for MWD(U) categorisation in the future; this was the case for 35% of Navy MWD members and 24% of both Army and Air Force MWD members.

**Figure 13: Intention to apply (or reapply) for categorisation as MWD(U) in future by Service**



Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
 Base: Total Permanent ADF members categorised as MWD(U) (N=4,097) or MWD (N=28,443); Total N=32,540



# Reserve ADF Members

## Previous Defence Experience

In the 2023 Census, 48% of ADF Reserve had some form of previous Defence experience, down from 56% in the 2019 Census. This was the case for 70% of Navy members, 61% of Air Force members and 40% of Army members. One in three (33%) of all Reserve ADF members had previous experience in the Permanent Forces, 19% in the ADF Reserve and 16% in another Defence-related organisation. Previous Service experience was strongly associated with current Service:

- Over one half (54%) of current Naval Reserve members had previously served in Navy as a Permanent member and 24% had previously served as a Reserve member of the Royal Australian Navy.
- Approximately one-quarter (24%) of current Army Reserve members had previously served as a Permanent member and 16% had previously served as a Reserve member of the Australian Regular Army.
- More than two in five (42%) current Air Force Reserve members had previously served as a Permanent member in Air Force and 16% as a Reserve member of the Royal Australian Air Force.

## Previous Cadet and Gap Year Experience

Reserve ADF members were asked whether they had participated in any Defence programs or cadet organisations prior to joining the ADF, or whether they were currently doing so. Overall, 23% of Reserve ADF members had participated in Defence programs prior to joining the ADF. The most common programs participated in were the Australian Army Cadets (11%) and the Australian Air Force Cadets or Air Training Corps (7%). Within the ADF Reserve Services:

- 14% of Air Force members had participated in Australian Air Force Cadets or Air Training Corps;
- 13% of Army members had participated in Australian Army Cadets; and
- 8% of Navy members had participated in Navy Cadets with another 7% participating in Army Cadets.

In total 3% of current Reserve ADF members had ADF Gap Year experience, most commonly previous to the 2023 Gap Year (2%) as shown below in Table 16.

**Table 16: Participation in Defence programs or Cadet organisations in ADF(R) by Service**

Participation in Defence programs/Cadet organisations	Total ADF(R) %	Navy %	Army %	Air Force %
<i>N</i>	<i>20,852</i>	<i>2,401</i>	<i>14,332</i>	<i>4,119</i>
SERVOP G in 2023 (ADF Gap Year)	*	-	*	*
SERVOP G (ADF Gap Year) previously	2	1	3	3
<i>TOTAL participated in any SERVOP G (Gap Year)</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>3</i>
Indigenous Entry Programs	*	*	*	*
Defence Graduate Program	*	*	1	*
Defence Work Experience Program	1	1	1	1
Australian Naval Cadets	2	8	1	1
Australian Army Cadets	11	7	13	5
Australian Air Force Cadets or Air Training Corps	7	5	5	14
<i>TOTAL any program</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>22</i>
None of the above	77	79	77	78
No response provided	*	-	*	-

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Multiple answers allowed. Column totals may add to greater than 100%. - indicates a zero response and \* indicates a value between 0% and 0.5%.  
Base: Total Reserve ADF members



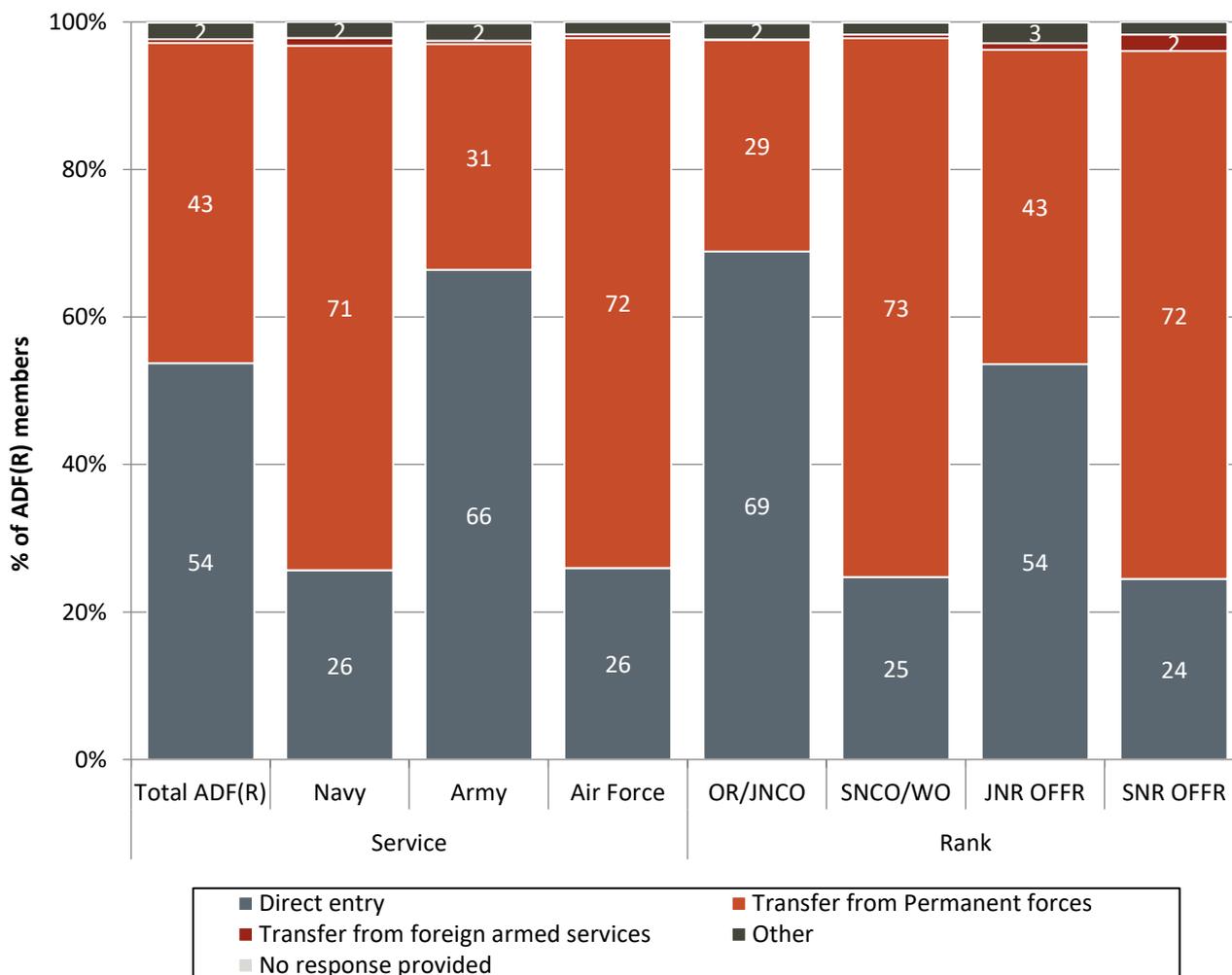
Males within the ADF Reserve were more likely than females to have participated in a Defence program or cadet organisation prior to entering the ADF (24% compared with 15%). However, females (6%) were three times as likely as males (2%) to have participated in an ADF Gap Year. A higher proportion of Officers had participated in some form of Defence program or cadet organisations than had other ranks – 27% of Senior Officers and 25% of Junior Officers, compared with 21% each of SNCO/WO and OR/JNCO members. Four percent of OR/JNCO had participated in an ADF Gap Year.

## Avenue of entry into the Reserve Force

Just over half of Reserve ADF members (54%) entered the Reserve Force through direct entry, with another four in ten (43%) entering via transfer from the Permanent Force. This was largely driven by Army members, who comprised 69% of the ADF Reserve at the time of the 2023 ADF Census, and who entered via direct entry in 66% of cases. In the other Services, most current members entered via transfer from the Permanent Force (71% for Navy and 72% for Air Force).

Both males (54%) and females (51%) were most likely to have entered via direct entry (indicating that differences in avenue of entry were largely Service and/or rank driven, rather than gender). OR/JNCO members (69%) and Junior Officers (54%) were most likely to enter the ADF Reserve via direct entry, while SNCO/WO members (73%) and Senior Officers (72%) were most likely to enter via transfer from the Permanent Force, as shown in Figure 14 below.

**Figure 14: Avenue of entry into ADF(R) by Service and Rank**



Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
 Base: Total Reserve ADF members N=20,852; Navy N=2,401, Army N=14,332, Air Force N=4,119; OR/JNCO N=10,372, SNCO/WO N=3,599, JNR OFFR N=5,101, SNR OFFR N=1,780

## Reserve Service undertaken

Overall, 91% of Reserve ADF members undertook at least one Reserve Service Day in the 12 months leading up to the 2023 ADF Census<sup>10</sup> (compared to 94% in the 2019 Census). This proportion was highest in Army (94%), followed by Air Force (90%) and Navy (77%). Among those who had completed at least one Reserve Service Day, those in Army tended to have completed fewer days of service (median 46 days) compared with those in Navy (median 50 days) or Air Force (median 51 days). Both males and females undertook a median of 50 days service in the 12 months prior to the 2023 ADF Census, as shown in Table 17 below.

**Table 17: Reserve service undertaken by ADF(R) members by Service**

Number of days Reserve Service undertaken in last 12 months <i>N</i>	Total ADF(R) %	Navy %	Army %	Air Force %
	20,852	2,401	14,332	4,119
None	9	23	6	10
1-14 days	9	7	10	9
15-28 days	16	16	16	15
29-42 days	16	12	18	14
43-56 days	11	6	12	8
57-70 days	9	5	11	6
71-100 days	13	8	14	11
101-130 days	6	7	5	7
131-160 days	6	7	5	9
161-365 days	5	9	3	11
<i>TOTAL spent at least one day on Reserve Service</i>	<i>91</i>	<i>77</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>90</i>
No response provided	*	-	*	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Median no. of days spent undertaking Reserve Service	50	50	46	51

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** - indicates a zero response and \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding

Base: Total Reserve ADF members

Of all Reserve ADF members, 45% undertook 1-4 blocks of five or more days of Reserve service in the 12 months leading up to the 2023 ADF Census, with 62% having undertaken at least one block. Just under a third (32%) of Reserve ADF members had not undertaken any blocks of five or more days of Reserve service.

Army members (65%) were the most likely to have undertaken at least one block of Reserve service, compared with 58% of Air Force and 49% of Navy, with a higher proportion of Navy members indicating that they had *only* undertaken SERVOP C (Continuous Full Time Service [CFTS]) during this period (16% compared with 5% for Army and 4% for Air Force). The median number of blocks of service undertaken (by those who had undertaken at least 1 block) was 3 blocks for both Navy and Air Force, and 2 blocks for Army.

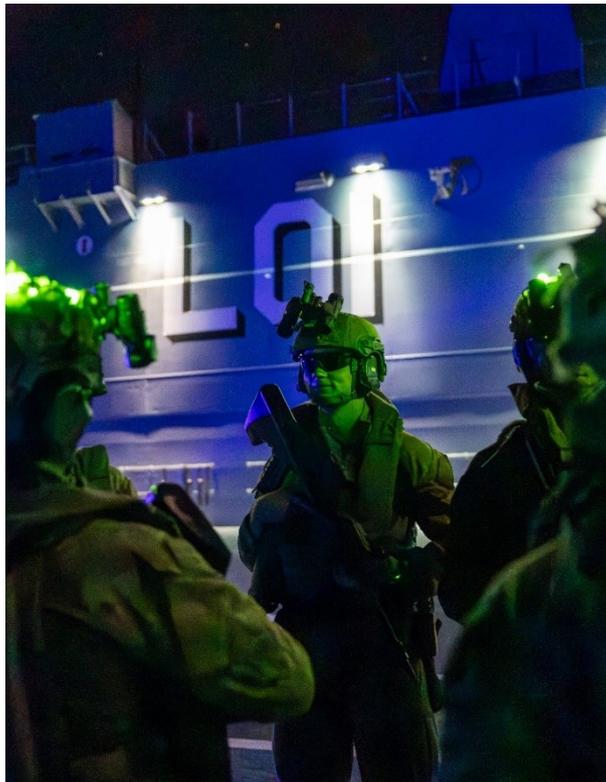
<sup>10</sup> Note that Reserve ADF members on SERVOP C (CFTS) may not have done any Reserve Service Days in the last 12 months. Members transferring from SERCAT 7 & 6 to the Reserve may not yet have undertaken a day of Reserve service at the time of the Census.



Males (63%) were more likely than females (56%) to have undertaken at least one block of Reserve service in the past 12 months. The median number of blocks of service undertaken by those who had undertaken at least 1 block was 3 blocks for both males and females. The proportion of Reserve ADF members who undertook at least one block of Reserve service was similar across rank groups. Of those who had undertaken at least one block, Senior Officers had conducted a median of 4 blocks of service, compared with a median of 3 blocks for SNCO/WO and 2 blocks for both OR/JNCO and Junior Officers.

Overall, 12% of Reserve ADF members indicated that they had spent at least one day on SERVOP C (CFTS) in the 12 months leading up to the 2023 ADF Census – of those, the median number of days spent on SERVOP C (CFTS) was 160 days. Navy members (22%) were substantially more likely than those in Army or Air Force (both 11%) to have spent any time on SERVOP C (CFTS) over this time, and spent a higher number of days on SERVOP C (CFTS) overall (median of 300 days, compared with 202 days for Air Force and 100 days for Army).

Females were slightly more likely than males to have undertaken any days of SERVOP C (CFTS) in the last 12 months (14%, compared with 12% of males), but of those who undertook at least one day of SERVOP C (CFTS), females had a lower median number of days served (males, 161 days; females, 152 days). Over the same time period, Officers were more likely to have undertaken any days of SERVOP C (CFTS) (Senior Officers, 18%; Junior Officers, 17%) than SNCO/WO (13%) or OR/JNCO members (9%). Among those who had undertaken at least one day of SERVOP C (CFTS), Senior Officers tended to have done so for a higher number of days (median of 299 days) and OR/JNCO the least (median of 60 days).



## Operational Service

For the 2023 Census, 'operationally deployed' or 'force assigned' meant being on ADF operations as part of a formed body, unit or Task Force either domestically or internationally. Force assignments may have included deployments as part of a formed body such as a unit or ship or platform to an Area of Operations, or an individual rotation. Respondents to the Census were instructed to include any deployment to Defence Assistance to Civil Community (DACC), or Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR) Operations e.g. Operation COVID-19 Assist and Bushfire Assist. In 2023, members were asked about deployments since the last Defence Census in 2019, similar to the four year time frame used in the previous Census. For the first time, members were asked separately about domestic and international deployments.

Since the 2019 Defence Census, 37% of all Reserve ADF members had been operationally deployed at least once, an increase from 19% in the 2019 Defence Census. Army members (42%) were substantially more likely to have been deployed than Naval members (27%) or Air Force (24%) members. This was driven by a higher proportion of domestic deployments as a Reserve member for Army (34%), compared with 11% for Navy and 12% for Air Force.

Overall, 29% of Reserve ADF members had been deployed as a Reserve member since the last Defence Census, with 27% deployed domestically as a Reserve member. Being deployed as a Reserve member was most common among Army members (35%), followed by Navy (15%) and Air Force (14%). Of Reserve ADF members, 11% had been deployed as a Permanent ADF member since the last Defence Census, with little difference in proportions of those deployments being domestic (7%) and international (6%), with only small differences between Services, as shown in Table 18 below.

**Table 18: Operational deployments since last Defence Census in ADF(R) by Service**

Operationally deployed since last Defence Census (2019)	Total ADF(R) %	Navy %	Army %	Air Force %
<i>N</i>	20,852	2,401	14,332	4,119
Deployed domestically as a Reserve member	27	11	34	12
Deployed internationally as a Reserve member	5	6	4	5
<i>TOTAL deployed as a Reserve member</i>	29	15	35	14
Deployed domestically as a Permanent member	7	10	7	7
Deployed internationally as a Permanent member	6	8	5	8
<i>TOTAL deployed as a Permanent member</i>	11	14	10	12
<i>TOTAL deployed since last Census</i>	37	27	42	24
Have not been operationally deployed since the last Defence Census	63	73	58	76
No response provided	*	-	*	-

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Multiple answers allowed. Column totals may add to greater than 100%. - indicates a zero response and \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%

Base: Total Reserve ADF members

Male Reserve members were more likely than females to have been deployed since the last Defence Census (38% and 30% respectively). The variation between genders was particularly evident for domestic deployments as Reserve member (males, 29%; females 19%). By rank, OR/JNCO (42%) were the most likely to have been deployed since the last Defence Census, and Senior Officers (26%) the least likely.



Among those who had been deployed as a Reserve ADF member (N=6,026), more than half (54%) had been deployed once, with a further 24% deployed twice and 11% deployed three times. On average, Navy members who had been deployed as a Reserve member had been deployed more often than those in Army or Air Force, with 31% of Naval Reserve deployed three or more times, compared with 22% and 17% for Army and Air Force respectively, as shown in Table 19 below.

Females (60%) were more likely than males (53%) to have been deployed only one time. There was little difference between rank groups in the number of times operationally deployed.

**Table 19: Number of operational deployments as Reserve member by Service**

Times deployed as Reserve member since last Defence Census (2019)	Total deployed as ADF(R) %	Navy %	Army %	Air Force %
N	6,026	353	5,082	591
1 time	54	54	54	57
2 times	24	16	24	25
3 times	11	14	11	7
4 - 6 times	9	13	9	7
7 times or more	2	4	2	3
Can't say	*	-	*	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** - indicates a zero response and \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding

Base: Total Reserve ADF members deployed as a Reserve member since the last Defence Census (N=6,026)

## Operational deployments in last 12 months

In the last 12 months, 12% of Reserve ADF members had been operationally deployed. When re-based, this is equivalent to 32% of those Reserve members who had been operationally deployed since the last Defence Census in 2019. Army members were most likely (13%) to have been deployed for any period, compared with those in Navy (10%) or Air Force (7%).

Males (12%) were slightly more likely than females (10%) to have been operationally deployed in the last 12 months. By rank, OR/JNCO (14%) and Junior Officers (11%) were more likely to have been operationally deployed in the last 12 months than SNCO/WO (9%) or Senior Officers (7%).



## Education and Training

A sizeable majority (85%) of Reserve ADF members had post-school qualifications, including 24% with their highest qualification being a Bachelor Degree and 25% a Postgraduate Award. This is an increase from the Defence Census 2019, where 81% of Reserve ADF members had a post-school qualification, including 21% who had a Bachelor Degree and 23% who had a Postgraduate Award.

Army members (83%) were less likely than those in the other Services to have post-school qualifications (Navy, 92%; Air Force, 89%). Navy members (37%) were the most likely to hold a Postgraduate Award, compared with 22% of Army and 28% of Air Force members.

Females were more likely than males to have completed higher levels of post-school education, such as a Bachelor Degree (27%, compared with 23% of males) and Postgraduate Award (28%, compared with 25% of males). Almost all Senior Officers (99%) and Junior Officers (95%) held post-school qualifications, compared with 81% among SNCO/WO and 79% among OR/JNCO. Almost three-quarters (74%) of Senior Officers held a Postgraduate Award, as did almost half (46%) of Junior Officers.

## STEM Education

In the 2023 Census, Reserve ADF members were asked if they had any qualifications in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) related subjects<sup>11</sup> at any level, not just their highest level of education. Over half of Reserve ADF members with post-school education (N=17,779) indicated that they had some form of STEM qualification (56%). This was slightly higher for those in Navy and Air Force (both 58%) than Army (55%).

Males with post-school education (58%) were more likely to have any STEM related qualifications than similarly educated females (48%). By rank, SNCO/WO members (49%) with post-school qualifications were less likely than the remaining rank groups to have any STEM qualifications (OR/JNCO, 58%; Junior Officers, 56%; Senior Officers, 55%).

Of those Reserve ADF members with STEM qualifications, the most commonly held STEM qualifications were Bachelor degrees (36%), followed by qualifications at the Trade/Vocational Certificate level (31%). Just over one quarter of those with a STEM qualification indicated it was at Diploma/Advanced Diploma (27%) or at the Postgraduate Award level (26%). A higher proportion of members of the Naval Reserve (34%) with a STEM qualification had a STEM qualification at the Postgraduate Award level, compared with members of Air Force (26%) or Army (25%), as shown in Table 20 below, while a lower proportion had a STEM qualification at the Trade/Vocational Certificate level (Navy, 25%; Army, 33%; Air Force, 30%).

**Table 20: Level of STEM qualifications of ADF(R) by Service**

Level of all STEM qualifications	Total ADF(R) with any STEM qualifications	Navy	Army	Air Force
	%	%	%	%
<i>N</i>	9,958	1,284	6,561	2,113
Trade/Vocational Certificate (Cert I - IV) or equivalent	31	25	33	30
Diploma/Advanced Diploma	27	40	23	34
Bachelor Degree (incl. with Honours)	36	29	39	31
Postgraduate Award (e.g. Masters, PhD)	26	34	25	26
No response provided	*	-	*	-

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Multiple answers allowed. Column totals may add to greater than 100%. - indicates a zero response and \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%

Base: Total Reserve ADF members with STEM qualifications (N=9,958)

<sup>11</sup> For the purposes of this Census, STEM qualifications include Natural and Physical Sciences, Information Technology (including Cyber), Engineering, Architecture, Agriculture and Environmental Studies, Medicine, Nursing, and other Health related studies (including Psychology)



Of those with any STEM qualifications (48% of all Reserve ADF members; N=9,958), the most common subjects studied were:

- Engineering and Related Technologies (41%);
- Information Technology (including Cyber) (18%);
- Natural and Physical Sciences (13%); and
- Other Health Related (12%).

Army Reserve members were less likely than those of other Services to have studied Engineering and Related Technologies (36%, compared with 52% for Navy and 50% for Air Force), but more likely to have studied Architecture and Building (8%, compared with 2% for Air Force and 1% for Navy).

Consistent with results for Permanent ADF, amongst ADF Reserve, SNCO/WO members were the most likely to have studied Engineering and Related Technologies (61%), and Officer ranks were more likely than others to have studied Natural and Physical Sciences (26% of Senior Officers and 17% of Junior Officers). Junior Officers (12%) were also more likely than others to have studied Nursing. Males (47%) were almost four times more likely to have studied Engineering and Related Technologies than were females (12%). Females, conversely, were markedly more likely to have studied Nursing (21%) or Other Health Related subjects (29%) compared with males (4% and 9% respectively).

Reserve ADF members were asked if they possessed any STEM skills without formal qualification. In total, almost two in five (38%) indicated that they possessed at least one informal STEM skill, with the most common skills being Data skills (information services, analytics, excluding cyber) (15%), followed by Electronic skills (systems, communications) (13%) and Technical skills (instruments, machinery) (12%). Each of the Services had relatively similar proportions of members with an informal STEM skill, as well as similar proportions of members having each area of informal STEM skills.

Males (40%) were markedly more likely than females (29%) to possess any informal STEM skill. There was a lower proportion of SNCO/WO (33%) members with an informal STEM skill compared to the remaining rank groups (OR/JNCO, 39%; Junior Officers, 42%; Senior Officers, 38%).

Of all Reserve ADF members, 13% were studying for a STEM related qualification at the time of the 2023 ADF Census.

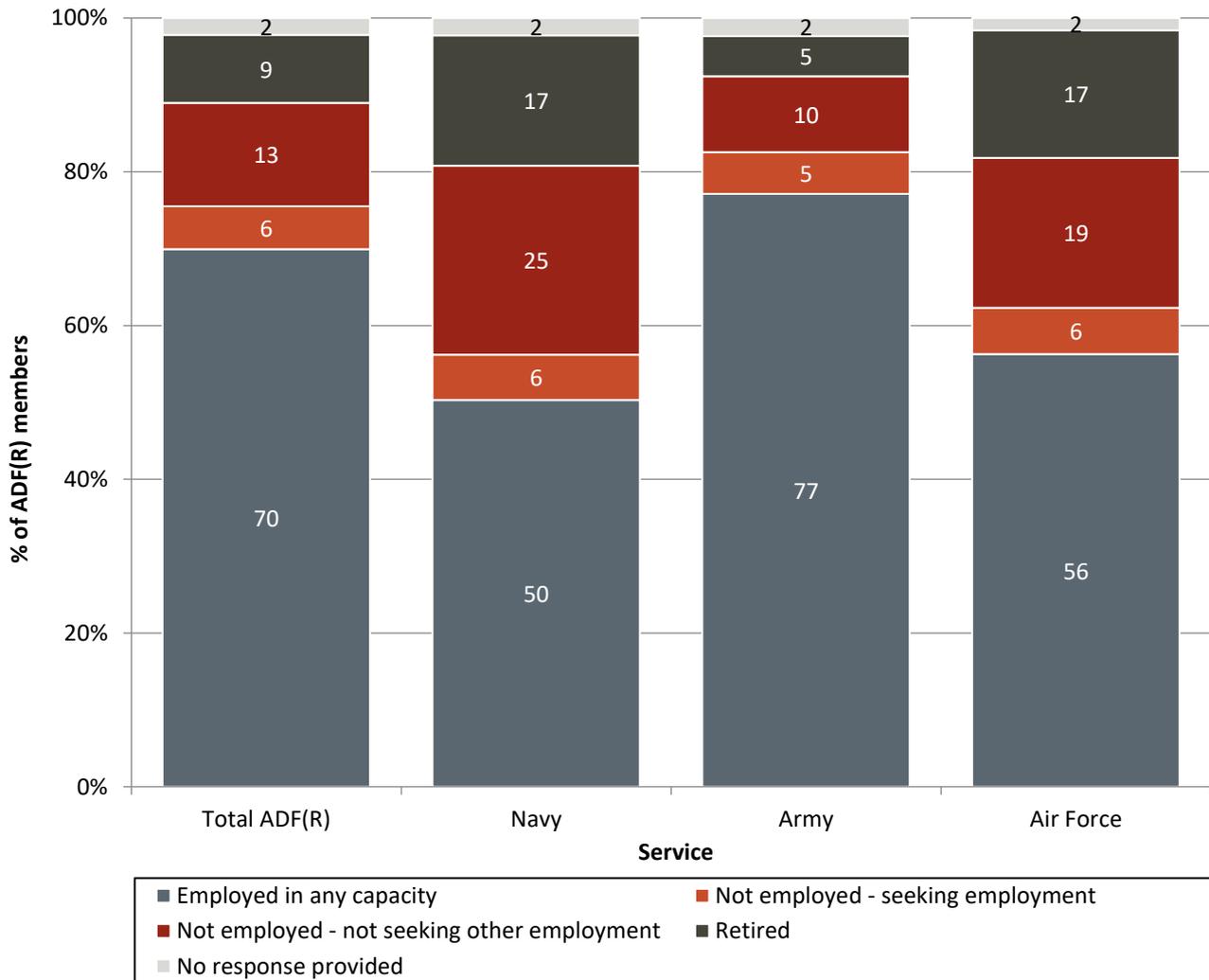


## Non-Reserve employment

Seven in ten (70%) Reserve members were employed in some capacity outside the ADF Reserve at the time of the 2023 Census. Army members (77%) were substantially more likely than those in Navy (50%) or Air Force (56%) to be in civilian employment. Virtually all of the differences in civilian employment between the Services can be attributed to the substantially higher proportion of Navy and Air Force members who were not seeking employment outside of the ADF Reserve, as shown below in Figure 15.

Males were more likely than females to be employed outside of the ADF Reserve (72% and 62% respectively). OR/JNCO members (80%) and Junior Officers (69%) were more likely to also be in civilian employment than SNCO/WO members (54%) and Senior Officers (43%).

**Figure 15: Current employment situation in ADF(R) by Service**



Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
 Base: Total Reserve ADF members N=20,852; Navy N=2,401, Army N=14,332, Air Force N=4,119

Members not currently employed outside the ADF Reserve (N=5,815) were asked why this was the case. Most commonly this was because:

- Reserve employment was sufficient (35%);
- They were semi-retired (33%);
- They did not need to work (16%); or
- They were currently looking for work (12%).



Army members (27%) were less likely than those in Navy (36%) and Air Force (42%) to cite semi-retirement as a reason for not working outside of the ADF Reserve, but noticeably more likely than those in the other Services to nominate currently looking for work (16%, compared with 9% of Navy and 8% of Air Force), or currently studying at University/TAFE (15%, compared with 4% of Navy and 5% of Air Force) as a reason. Those in Navy (49%) were more likely than those in Army (33%) or Air Force (32%) to say that Reserve employment is sufficient and those in Air Force (15%) were more likely than those in Navy (6%) or Army (9%) to cite needing to stay at home and meet the needs of the family.

Males were substantially more likely than females to indicate they did not work outside of the ADF Reserve as they were semi-retired (38%, compared with 17% among females) and/or don't need to work (18%, compared with 10% among females), and far less likely to need to stay at home and meet the needs of the family (7%, compared with 20% among females) or need to be at home when the children are out of school (2%, compared with 10% among females).

Almost one quarter (23%) of all Reserve ADF members employed outside the ADF Reserve (N=14,580) were employed by a State Government, with this more likely to be the case among Army members (25%) than those in the Navy (16%) or Air Force (20%). Army members (7%) were less likely than those in Navy (15%) or Air Force (12%) to be employed as Defence APS. Most commonly, however, members were employed in *other* civilian employers (non-defence related) (including self-employed) (39%), as shown in Table 21 below.

**Table 21: Type of organisation employed in outside of ADF Reserve amongst ADF(R) by Service**

Type of employer organisation outside ADF(R)	Total ADF(R) employed outside ADF Reserve	Navy	Army	Air Force
	%	%	%	%
N	14,580	1,207	11,055	2,318
State Government	23	16	25	20
Defence Industry	10	19	7	19
Department of Defence (APS)	8	15	7	12
Commonwealth Government department or agency (APS) (excluding Defence)	7	9	7	6
Not-for-profit organisation	6	7	6	5
Defence Contract Service Provider	3	5	2	5
Local Government	2	1	3	2
Department of Veteran's Affairs (DVA)	*	*	*	*
Defence Housing Australia (DHA)	*	-	*	-
Other employer, including self-employed	39	35	41	34
No other organisation	8	6	9	5
No response provided	*	*	*	-

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** - indicates a zero response and \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding

Base: Total Reserve ADF members employed outside of ADF Reserve (N=14,580)

The vast majority (89%) of all Reserve ADF members employed outside the ADF Reserve (N=14,580) were working for an employer for a wage or salary in their main civilian job. Another 9% were working in their own business, either with employees (3%) or without employees (6%). Navy members (10%) were more likely than those in Army or Air Force (both 6%) to be working in their own business without employees. This was the main factor contributing to Navy (84%) having the lowest proportion of members working for an employer for a wage or salary in their main civilian job (compared to 89% for Army and 88% for Air Force).

Almost three quarters (73%) of all Reserve members employed outside the ADF Reserve were employed on a permanent full-time basis in their main civilian job, with Navy members (69%) slightly less likely than the other Services in this regard (Army, 73%; Air Force, 72%).

Most commonly, Reserve ADF members employed outside the ADF Reserve were working as a:

- Professional (38%);
- Manager (16%);
- Community and personal service worker (15%); or
- Technicians and trades worker (13%).

Army members (35%) were less likely than those in Navy (50%) or Air Force (43%) to be professionals, and more likely to be community and personal service workers (Army 16%, compared with 7% of Navy and 11% of Air Force), as shown in Table 22 below.

**Table 22: Occupation group of main civilian job of ADF(R) members by Service**

Occupation group of main civilian job	Total ADF(R) employed outside ADF Reserve	Navy	Army	Air Force
<i>N</i>	% 14,580	% 1,207	% 11,055	% 2,318
Professionals	38	50	35	43
Managers	16	16	16	13
Community and Personal Service Workers	15	7	16	11
Technicians and Trades Workers	13	11	14	14
Clerical and Administrative Workers	6	8	6	8
Labourers	3	1	3	1
Machinery Operators and Drivers	3	1	3	1
Sales Workers	1	1	2	1
Other	5	6	5	8
No response provided	1	*	1	*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
Base: Total Reserve ADF members employed outside of ADF Reserve (N=14,580)

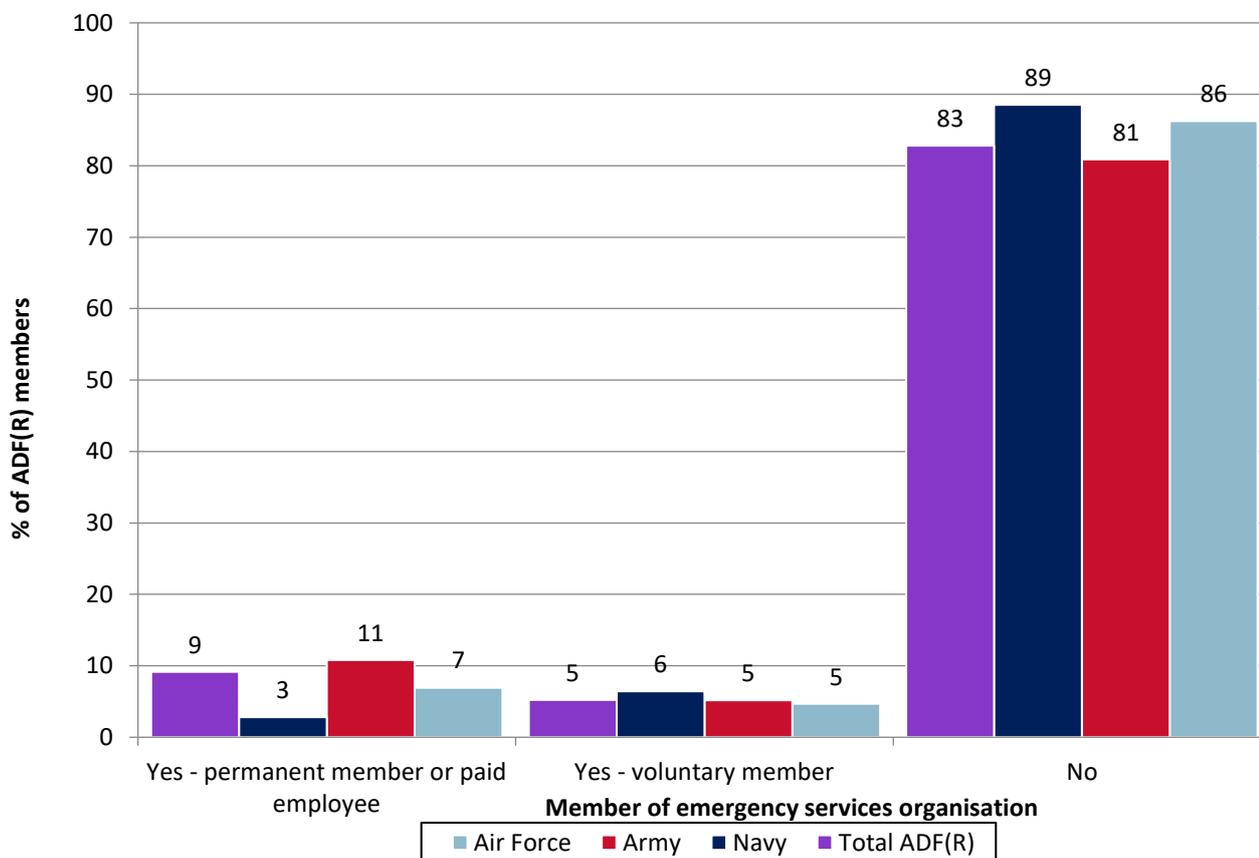


With respect to industry of employment, members of the ADF Reserve employed outside the ADF Reserve (N=14,580) were most commonly employed in public administration (including Defence) and safety (21%), followed by health care and social assistance (11%) and professional, scientific and technical services (10%). Navy members (20%) were more likely than those in the other Services to be employed in professional, scientific and technical services (Army, 8%; Air Force, 14%). Army members (5%) were more likely than those in Navy or Air Force (both 2%) to be employed in construction. Air Force members (8%) were more likely than those in Navy (5%) or Army (5%) to be employed in transport, postal and warehousing in their main civilian job.

Overall, members employed outside of the ADF Reserve worked for a median of 40 hours per week in their civilian jobs, consistent across the Services, with 51% working between 31 and 40 hours per week, and 24% working between 41 and 50 hours per week.

Nine percent of all Reserve ADF members were also a permanent member or paid employee of a civilian emergency services organisation, and a further 5% were voluntary members. Army members (11%) were the most likely to be a permanent member of such an organisation, followed by Air Force (7%) and Navy (3%). There was no notable difference between the Services in terms of likelihood to be a voluntary member, as shown in Figure 16 below.

**Figure 16: Member of emergency services organisation amongst ADF(R) by Service**



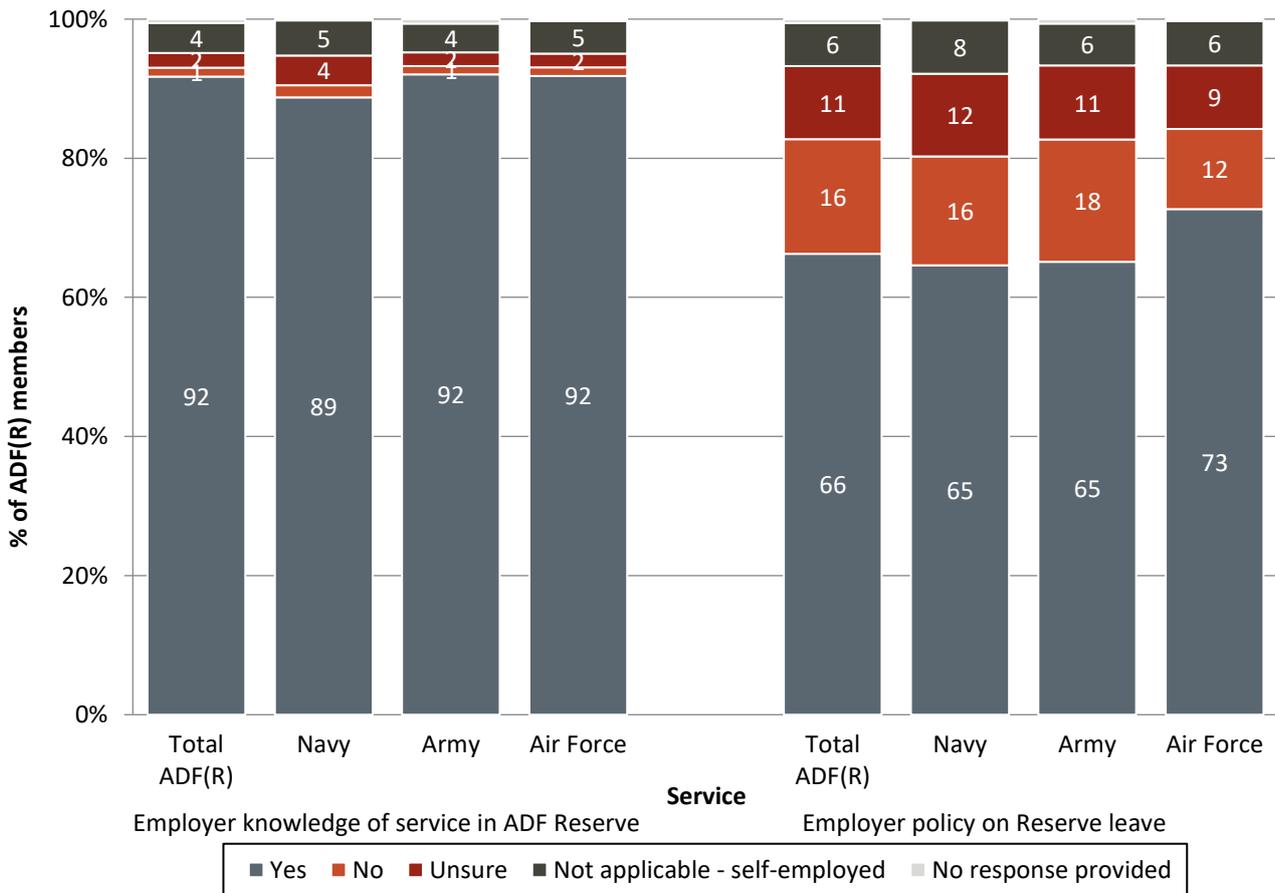
Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Values may not sum to totals due to rounding  
 Base: Total Reserve ADF members N=20,852; Navy N=2,401, Army N=14,332, Air Force N=4,119

## Leave taken to undertake Reserve Service

Almost all Reserve ADF members in civilian employment (N=14,580) said that their employer knew about their service in the ADF Reserve (92%) or that the question was moot as they were self-employed (4%). One percent said that their employer did not know about their service in the ADF Reserve and a further 2% were unsure about their employer’s knowledge.

In addition, two-thirds (66%) reported that their employer had a policy on Reserve leave, with 16% saying this was *not* the case and 11% indicating that they were unsure. Navy (16%) and Army (18%) members were more likely as those in Air Force (12%) to say that their employer did not have a policy on Reserve leave (see Figure 17 below).

**Figure 17: ADF(R) main civilian employer knowledge of ADF Reserve service and policy on Reserve leave by Service**



Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Values may not sum to totals due to rounding

Base: Total Reserve ADF members employed outside ADF Reserve N=14,580; Navy N=1,207, Army N=11,055, Air Force N=2,318



Amongst Reserve ADF members in civilian employment (N=14,580), 65% had used at least one form of leave to undertake blocks of ADF service of five days or more in the 12 months prior to the 2023 ADF Census. Army members (68%) were more likely to have done so than those in Air Force (59%) or Navy (52%), as shown in Table 23 below.

**Table 23: Type of leave taken from civilian employment to undertake Reserve service**

Type of leave taken from civilian employment in last 12 months to undertake blocks of ADF service of five days or more	Total ADF(R) employed outside ADF Reserve	Navy	Army	Air Force
<i>N</i>	%	%	%	%
	14,580	1,207	11,055	2,318
Special paid leave for Reserve Training/Paid military leave	37	31	38	38
Unpaid leave	20	14	22	14
Paid recreation/holiday leave/annual leave	13	10	14	13
Unpaid military leave	8	5	8	7
Other types of paid leave	2	2	2	2
Paid, but on a make-up basis	2	2	2	2
Paid long service leave	2	2	2	2
<b>TOTAL taken any leave</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>59</b>
No leave taken	18	25	16	21
No blocks of ADF service of five days or more in the last 12 months	15	22	13	19
Don't know	2	2	2	1
No response provided	1	*	1	*

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** Multiple answers allowed. Column totals may add to greater than 100%. \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%

Base: Total Reserve ADF members employed outside ADF Reserve (N=14,580)

In addition, almost half (46%) of Reserve ADF members employed outside the ADF Reserve (N=14,580) had used at least one form of flexible working arrangement in the 12 months prior to the 2023 ADF Census in order to meet Reserve commitments, up from 35% in the 2019 Defence Census. Navy members (51%) were more likely than those in Army (46%) or Air Force (45%) to have used any form of flexible working arrangement over this time period.

Overall, the form of flexible working arrangement most commonly used by Reserve ADF members in the last 12 months was changing hours of work (25%), followed by working from home (20%) and utilised leave (16%). The proportion that worked from home as a flexible work arrangement increased from 9% in the 2019 Census. Navy members (28%) were more likely than those in Army (19%) or Air Force (21%) to have worked from home, with little variation across the Services in the usage of other forms of flexible working arrangement.

## Partners of Reserve ADF members

Across the ADF Reserve, nearly three quarters (74%) of members were married or in a relationship. Among Reserve ADF members with a spouse/partner (N=15,511), four in five (81%) said their spouse/partner was currently employed. The proportion of members whose partner was employed was higher among Army (84%) than Navy (75%) or Air Force (74%). Much of the difference in these employment rates can be attributed to the substantially lower proportion of Army members whose spouse/partner was out of the workforce because they had retired (5%, compared with 13% among Navy and 14% among Air Force).

Among Reserve ADF members with a spouse/partner currently employed (N=11,995), the vast majority (92%) were employed outside the ADF or Defence APS. Army members (6%) were the least likely to have a spouse/partner serving in the ADF or Defence APS at the time of the Census, compared with 12% among Navy and 13% among Air Force, as shown in Table 24 below.

**Table 24: ADF(R) partners' main employer by Service**

Partner main employer	Total ADF(R) with employed partner %	Navy %	Army %	Air Force %
<i>N</i>	11,995	1,376	8,290	2,328
Permanent Force	3	5	2	5
Reserve Force	2	3	2	3
Department of Defence (APS)	3	4	2	5
<i>TOTAL ADF + Defence APS</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>13</i>
Government (non-Defence) (including Commonwealth, State and Local Government)	28	25	29	24
Defence Related Employer	3	5	2	5
Other employer, including self-employed	61	58	63	57
<i>TOTAL employed outside ADF/Defence APS</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>87</i>
No response provided	*	-	*	*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: ADF Census 2023. **Note:** - indicates a zero response and \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding

Base: Total Reserve ADF members with an employed spouse/partner (N=11,995)

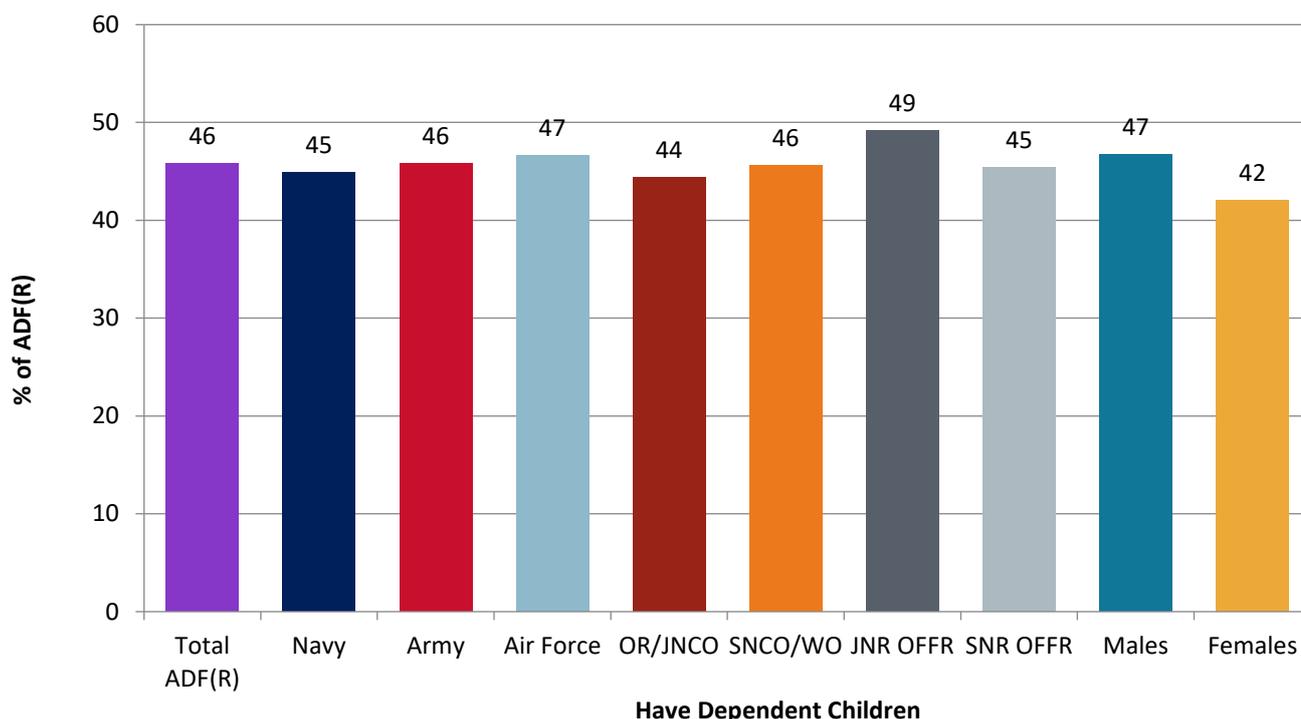




## Children of Reserve ADF members

For the purpose of the 2023 ADF Census, a dependent child was defined as a member’s own child (including an adopted child, stepchild, child of their partner (including de facto relationships), ex-nuptial child, foster-child or ward) who was financially dependent on them, and who is aged 21 or less; or is a full-time student aged 25 years or less; or has a disability/infirmity. Overall, 46% of Reserve ADF members had at least one dependent child at the time of the 2023 ADF Census. This was relatively consistent between the Services (Navy, 45%, Army 46%; Air Force, 47%). Junior Officers (49%) were more likely to have dependent children than were OR/JNCO (44%), SNCO/WO (46%) or Senior Officers (45%). Males were somewhat more likely to have dependent children than were females (47% and 42% respectively), as shown in Figure 18 below.

**Figure 18: Dependent children in ADF(R) by Service, Rank and Gender**



Source: ADF Census 2023

Base: Total Reserve ADF members N=20,852; Navy N=2,401, Army N=14,332, Air Force N=4,119; OR/JNCO N=10,372, SNCO/WO N=3,599, JNR OFFR N=5,101, SNR OFFR N=1,780

Among Reserve ADF members with dependent children (N=9,565), 9% were sole parents. There was no notable difference between the Services. OR/JNCO members had a slightly higher proportion of sole parents (11%) in comparison to the other rank groups and females had a substantially higher proportion of sole parents compared to males (23% and 6%, respectively).

## Dependants with special needs

For the 2023 ADF Census, a dependant with special needs was someone who had been formally diagnosed by a specialist as having one or more special needs. A dependant with special needs could include a member’s spouse/partner, child(ren) or other dependants living with them.

Overall, 13% of Reserve ADF members had one or more dependants with special needs. This included 10% with a child or children with special needs, 6% with a spouse/partner with special needs and 1% with other dependants with special needs. There was no notable difference between the Services in terms of the presence or types of dependants with special needs.

Among those with any dependants with special needs, the most common forms of special need were autism (27%), social, emotional or behavioural special needs (25%) and a medical condition, illness or disability (21%). Navy (28%) and Air Force (27%) members were more likely than Army members (19%) to have one or more dependants with a medical condition, illness or disability.

## Conclusion

In April through to June 2023, 35,284 Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel, comprising ADF Permanent and Reserve members, voluntarily participated in the ninth Defence Census to be held since 1991. Census forms were distributed primarily by email, supported by hardcopy forms, to over 78,000 ADF personnel serving both nationally and worldwide. Defence appreciates the effort and time taken by those personnel to contribute to this very important research. The findings of the 2023 ADF Census are already being used to support the development of current and future personnel policies and conditions. The research data is also used to support the development of social and family infrastructure in areas where ADF personnel are employed, both now and into the future.

This report outlines the demographic attributes of the ADF workforce as they were in 2023. The results reflect a snapshot of the composition of the ADF workforce confirming the effect of policy, tempo and change in Australian society and how it has impacted the ADF workforce. This is more evident in the increase in females across the ADF, people identifying as First Nations people and the increase in people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The Census shows that while the ADF workforce is ageing, based on higher proportions in older age bands, the median ages of the workforce are largely unchanged or marginally older, reflecting the younger ages of new entrants. The provision of information on STEM qualifications and their use by the ADF workforce is important for planning and setting policies for Defence's development of this workforce capability. While the proportion of members of the ADF workforce with partners was steady there was an increase in the partners of Permanent ADF members who were working.

The ADF Census demonstrates the tempo of ADF service with a high proportion of Permanent and Reserve ADF members having been operationally deployed, in the 12 months preceding the Census.

Requests for further information from the 2023 ADF Census should be directed to the Manager Defence Census at [defence.census@defence.gov.au](mailto:defence.census@defence.gov.au).





## Glossary

TERM	EXPLANATION
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ADF(P)	Permanent Force - refers to Permanent ADF members (SERCAT 7 & 6)
ADF(R)	Reserve Force - refers to Reserve ADF members (SERCAT 5, 4 & 3)
APS	Australian Public Service
Defence APS	Civilian personnel of the Department of Defence employed under the Public Service Act 1999
LIA	Living-in Accommodation
SERCAT	Service Category, part of the ADF Total Workforce System. SERCATs group members together, according to their approved service arrangements, conditions of service and obligation to serve.
SERVOP C (CFTS)	SERVOP C (Continuous Full-Time Service). Defence service rendered by Reserve members contracted to the ADF(P) performing Permanent duties for a specified time whilst remaining members of the ADF Reserve.
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
<b>ADF Rank Levels</b>	
REC	Recruit
APP	Apprentice
TRA	Trainee
SMN/PTE/AC/W	Seaman/Private/Aircraftman/Aircraftwoman
AB/PTE(P)/LAC/W	Able Seaman/Private (Proficient)/Leading Aircraftman/Aircraftwoman
LCPL	Lance Corporal
LS/CPL	Leading Seaman/Corporal
PO/SGT	Petty Officer/Sergeant
SSGT	Staff Sergeant
CPO/WO2/FSGT	Chief Petty Officer/Warrant Officer Class 2/Flight Sergeant
WO/WO1/WOFF	Warrant Officer/Warrant Officer Class 1/Warrant Officer
MIDN/SCDT/OCDD	Midshipman/Staff Cadet/Officer Cadet
ASLT/2LT/PLTOFF	Acting Sub Lieutenant/2nd Lieutenant/Pilot Officer
SBLT/LT/FLGOFF	Sub Lieutenant/Lieutenant/Flying Officer
LEUT/CAPT/FLTLT	Lieutenant/Captain/Flight Lieutenant
LCDR/MAJ/SQNLDR	Lieutenant Commander/Major/Squadron Leader
CMDR/LTCOL/WGCDR	Commander/Lieutenant Colonel/Wing Commander
CAPT/COL/GPCAPT	Captain/Colonel/Group Captain
CDRE/BRIG/AIRCDRE	Commodore/Brigadier/Air Commodore

TERM	EXPLANATION
<b>ADF Rank Bands (for Census reporting purposes)</b>	
OR/JNCO	Other Ranks/Junior Non-Commissioned Officer - includes SMN/PTE/AC/W, AB/LCPL/LAC/W, LS/CPL
SNCO/WO	Senior Non-Commissioned Officer/Warrant Officer - includes PO/SGT/SSGT, CPO/WO2/FSGT, WO/WO1/WOFF
JNR OFFR	Junior Officer - includes MIDN/SCDT/OCDT/OFFCDT, ASLT/2LT/PLTOFF, SBLT/LT/FLGOFF, LEUT/CAPT/FLTTLT, LCDR/MAJ/SQNLDR
SNR OFFR <sup>12</sup>	Senior Officer - includes CMDR/LTCOL/WGCDR, CAPT/COL/GPCAPT, CDRE/BRIG/AIRCDRE and above
<b>Defence Service/Groups (for Census reporting purposes)</b>	
Navy	Royal Australian Navy/Naval Reserve
Army	Australian Regular Army/Army Reserve
Air Force	Royal Australian Air Force/Air Force Reserve
<b>Categorisation<sup>13</sup> ADF(P)</b>	
MWD	Members with Dependants (An ADF member who maintains a home for dependants and lives in the home with one or more of those dependants; for example: married with children; married without children; in ADF recognised interdependent partnership; single parent with a child residing with them for more than 90 nights a year)
MWD(U)	Members with Dependants (Unaccompanied) (An ADF member with dependants who elects to move on posting unaccompanied by his/her dependants who continue to reside in their current location. MWD(U) is usually elected by serving members for the purpose of maintaining geographic stability for their families)
MWOD	Members without Dependants (An ADF member without ADF-recognised dependants; for example: single; divorced without children; divorced with children living elsewhere; in interdependent partnership (includes de facto relationship) not recognised by ADF; living apart from family for personal reasons)
<b>Flexible Working Arrangements</b>	
FWA	Flexible Working Arrangements
ALW	Alternate located work
HLW	Home located work
ROW	Remote overseas work
VWH	Variable work hours

<sup>12</sup> For the purpose of the Census, SNR OFFR rank group includes O5 rank and above. This has been consistent over previous Defence Censuses.

<sup>13</sup> Defence adopted a new categorisation framework in July 2023. As the ADF Census was collected from April 2023 the categorisation questions used the previous terminology and are reported in the Census results. Refer to page 13 for further details.



## Demographic Profile of the Permanent Force

	Total ADF(P)	Navy	Army	Air Force
Participants in Census	27,055	6,452	12,271	8,332
Total members	58,015	14,928	28,127	14,960
<b>Gender</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	78	75	84	73
Female	20	24	15	26
Non-binary	*	*	*	*
Prefer not to say/No response provided	1	1	1	*
<b>Age</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Under 20 years	5	5	6	5
20-29 years	39	41	42	31
30-39 years	28	27	27	30
40-49 years	17	15	16	21
50 years and over	11	11	9	14
<i>Median age</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>30</i>	<i>34</i>
No response provided/Can't say	*	*	*	-
<b>Rank</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Other Ranks/Junior Non-Commissioned Officers	54	53	59	44
Senior Non-Commissioned Officers/Warrant Officers	18	19	17	18
Junior Officers	24	23	19	32
Senior Officers	5	5	4	6
<b>Country of birth</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Australia	84	84	84	85
Overseas	15	15	15	15
Prefer not to say/No response provided	*	*	*	*
<b>Languages first spoken</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
English only	88	89	87	88
English and another language	8	8	9	8
Only a language other than English	4	3	4	4
No response provided	*	*	*	*
<b>Religion or religious group</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Identifies as having a religion or belonging to a religious group	38	36	39	38
Does not identify as having a religion or belonging to a religious group	61	62	60	61
Prefer not to say/No response provided	2	2	2	1
<b>First Nations People</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Not of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin	96	95	96	96
Aboriginal origin only	3	4	4	3
Torres Strait Islander origin only	*	*	*	*
Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin	*	*	*	*
<i>TOTAL Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>
Prefer not to say/No response provided	*	*	*	*

	Total ADF(P)	Navy	Army	Air Force
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	%	%	%	%
Straight (heterosexual)	93	90	94	92
Gay or lesbian	3	4	2	3
Bisexual	3	4	2	3
Use a different term	*	*	*	*
Don't know	1	1	1	1
Prefer not to say/no response provided	1	1	1	*
<b>Categorisation</b>	%	%	%	%
Member with Dependants [MWD]	49	43	49	56
Member with Dependants (Unaccompanied) [MWD(U)]	7	8	7	7
Member without Dependants [MWOD]	39	44	40	32
No response provided	5	5	5	5
<b>Relationship status</b>	%	%	%	%
Currently in a relationship	65	62	65	70
Not currently in a relationship	31	34	32	27
No response provided	4	4	4	3
<b>Dependent Children</b>	%	%	%	%
Has dependent children	35	32	35	41
Has dependent children who live with them for 90 nights or more a year	33	29	33	38
Has dependent children who live with them for less than 90 nights a year	6	6	6	6
<i>Median number of dependent children</i>	2	2	2	2
Does not have dependent children	60	64	61	55
No response provided	4	4	4	4
<b>Previous Defence membership or employment</b>	%	%	%	%
Previous Service with the Permanent Force	12	12	11	12
Previous Service with the Reserve Force	6	4	7	5
Other previous Defence-related employment	4	4	4	4
No previous Defence Service or employment	82	83	82	82
No response provided	*	*	*	*
<b>Participation in Defence program or Cadet organisation</b>	%	%	%	%
Participation in a Defence program	22	22	21	24
No previous participation in a Defence program	77	77	78	76
No response provided	*	1	*	*
<b>Years of service</b>	%	%	%	%
<i>Median years of ADF service in ADF (combined ADF(P) and ADF(R))</i>	7	7	7	10

**Note:** \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding



## Demographic Profile of the ADF Reserve

	Total ADF(R)	Navy	Army	Air Force
Participants in Census	8,229	1,059	5,441	1,729
Total members	20,852	2,401	14,332	4,119
<b>Gender</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	80	73	82	75
Female	19	26	17	24
Non-binary	*	1	*	*
Prefer not to say/No response provided	1	1	1	1
<b>Age</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Under 20 years	1	*	2	*
20-29 years	16	6	20	8
30-39 years	25	21	28	18
40-49 years	21	18	21	22
50 years and over	37	55	29	52
<i>Median age</i>	43	52	40	50
No response provided/Can't say	*	-	*	-
<b>Rank</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Other Ranks/Junior Non-Commissioned Officers	50	23	60	30
Senior Non-Commissioned Officers/Warrant Officers	17	27	14	24
Junior Officers	24	32	21	32
Senior Officers	9	18	6	13
<b>Country of birth</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Australia	80	80	80	82
Overseas	19	20	20	17
Prefer not to say/No response provided	*	*	*	*
<b>Languages first spoken</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
English only	84	91	82	89
English and another language	10	7	12	7
Only a language other than English	5	2	6	3
No response provided	*	*	*	*
<b>Religion or religious group</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Identifies as having a religion or belonging to a religious group	52	51	52	53
Does not identify as having a religion or belonging to a religious group	46	47	47	45
Prefer not to say/No response provided	2	1	2	2
<b>First Nations People</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Not of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin	97	98	96	97
Aboriginal origin only	3	1	3	2
Torres Strait Islander origin only	*	*	*	*
Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin	*	*	*	*
<i>TOTAL Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin</i>	3	1	3	3
Prefer not to say/No response provided	*	*	*	*

	Total ADF(R)	Navy	Army	Air Force
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	%	%	%	%
Straight (heterosexual)	95	94	95	95
Gay or lesbian	2	3	2	2
Bisexual	2	2	2	2
Use a different term	*	*	*	*
Don't know	1	*	1	*
Prefer not to say/no response provided	1	*	1	1
<b>Relationship status</b>	%	%	%	%
Currently in a relationship	74	81	71	81
Not currently in a relationship	22	17	25	16
No response provided	3	2	4	3
<b>Dependent Children</b>	%	%	%	%
Has dependent children	46	45	46	47
<i>Median number of dependent children</i>	2	2	2	2
Does not have dependent children	51	53	50	51
No response provided	3	2	4	3
<b>Previous Defence membership or employment</b>	%	%	%	%
Previous Service with the Permanent Force	33	56	26	48
Previous Service with the Reserve Force	19	28	17	22
Other previous Defence-related employment	16	25	13	18
No previous Defence Service or employment	52	30	59	39
No response provided	*	-	*	-
<b>Participation in Defence program or Cadet organisation</b>	%	%	%	%
Participation in a Defence program	23	21	23	22
No previous participation in a Defence program	77	79	77	78
No response provided	*	-	*	-
<b>Years of service</b>	%	%	%	%
<i>Median years of ADF service in ADF (combined ADF(P) and ADF(R))</i>	14	22	11	21
<i>Median years of ADF(R) service only</i>	5	5	6	5

**Note:** - indicates a zero response and \* indicates percentages >0% and <0.5%. Values may not sum to totals due to rounding



## Background to the Defence Census

The Defence Census gathers a variety of in-depth demographic, financial, educational and similar information from Defence members and their families that is not available from any other Defence or public sources of information in the one anonymous data holding.

The information obtained through the Defence Census is vital to planning, assessment and improvement of personnel services (including potential new services) for ADF members and their families and Reserve members.

Services such as education, childcare, housing and health services are under the jurisdiction of various Government and non-Government agencies. Therefore, it is important that Defence has up-to-date and authoritative information on its members when negotiating with various Government agencies and commercial providers in order to provide the right mix of services to ADF members and their families in an efficient and effective manner.

This information is also important to policy makers when evaluating the support and services that should and can be provided to Defence personnel and in developing strategies that target areas of greatest need. As these needs are subject to change over time, it is necessary for the information contained in the Census database to be updated regularly.

The first Defence Census was conducted on 12 March 1991, and involved ADF Permanent Force members only. The aim of this initial Census was to develop an authoritative and credible demographic database of the Permanent ADF workforce.

Following that first Census, the (then) Defence Force Personnel Policy Committee decided that, in order to maintain an up-to-date database, consistent with the issues covered by the 1991 Census, there was a need to conduct a similar Census at four yearly intervals. Subsequently, a Defence Census was conducted in 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019 and 2023. As with the first Census, the 1995 Census only included Permanent members of the ADF. In 1999 the scope of the Census was expanded to include members of the Reserve. The Census was further broadened in 2003 to 2019 to include Defence APS employees, changing its scope towards being a full Census of all Defence personnel. For the 2023 Census only Permanent and Reserve ADF members were enumerated.

Roy Morgan was commissioned by the Department of Defence to conduct the Census for each of the years 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2019 and 2023.

### Project management team

The Director General Workforce Strategy was the sponsor for ADF Census 2023. The Manager Defence Census was the Project Manager responsible for the overall management of the project on a day-to-day basis and for the coordination of Defence administrative support in conjunction with Roy Morgan.

All Defence Services and Groups, through representation on the Census Administrative Working Group provided direction to the Manager Defence Census on key Defence issues, and to Roy Morgan on the scope, format and content of the Census questions. The Census Administrative Working Group helped organise the distribution and collection of Census forms from within Defence locations.

## Administration of the Census

Unit Census coordinators were appointed within each Defence unit/organisation and were responsible for providing advice on the number and type of paper Census forms (Permanent ADF or ADF Reserve) required, and then receiving, distributing and collecting completed forms within their unit. In 2023, Base Managers and Customer Service Centres were also involved in the distribution and collection of Census forms. All personnel who received a paper form were given the opportunity to answer online by typing in a URL or using a QR code to access the online Census, using a unique form number. All Permanent ADF and ADF Reserve personnel were also sent an email invitation with a unique link to complete the Census online, without the need to have access to a paper form. This allowed personnel easier access to the Census if they would prefer to complete online, or who were not able to access a paper form due to location, or who had otherwise missed the opportunity to receive a form.

## Census target population

All Permanent and selected Reserve members of the ADF were encouraged to voluntarily participate in the Census. The Census included all personnel deployed on operations or serving overseas.

## Privacy

Participation in the ADF Census 2023 was voluntary and anonymity of respondents was guaranteed. The conduct of the Census conformed to the Australian Privacy Principles contained in *the Privacy Act 1988*. Participants were asked not to identify themselves on the Census form or in any comments. Ethics approval for this Census was obtained from the Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs Human Research Ethics Committee.

Following data transcription, all Census forms were destroyed by Roy Morgan.

## Acknowledgement

The conduct of the 2023 Census was an immense and complex undertaking. Defence wishes to acknowledge the outstanding support work undertaken by the members of the Defence Census Administrative Working Group, the many Census Coordinators, Base Managers, Customer Service Centres and the Defence Primary Mail Centre staff, all of whom carried out their Census duties as an adjunct to their normal daily work. Without the assistance of those people, Defence would not have been able to conduct the Census. Defence also acknowledges the extensive work undertaken by Roy Morgan in preparing, distributing, recovering, compiling, analysing and presenting the 2023 ADF Census. Defence looks forward to conducting the next ADF Census, planned to occur in 2027.

## Further information

Requests for further information from the ADF Census 2023 and the Defence Census program can be made to the Manager Defence Census at [defence.census@defence.gov.au](mailto:defence.census@defence.gov.au).



**Australian Government**  

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**Defence**

For further information contact:

Manager Defence Census  
Workforce Strategy Branch  
Defence People Group  
Department of Defence

Email: [defence.census@defence.gov.au](mailto:defence.census@defence.gov.au)

[www.defence.gov.au/defencecensus](http://www.defence.gov.au/defencecensus)